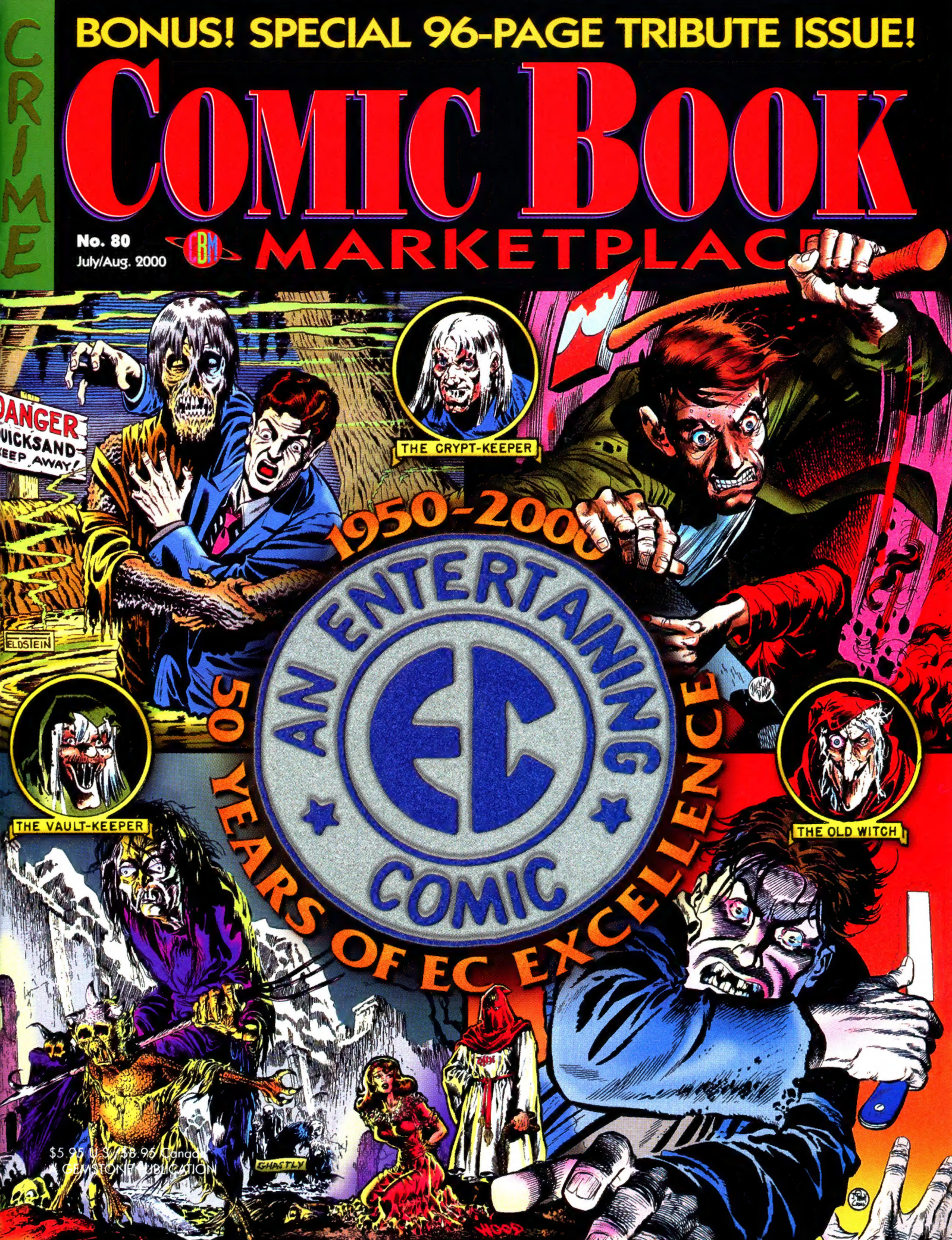
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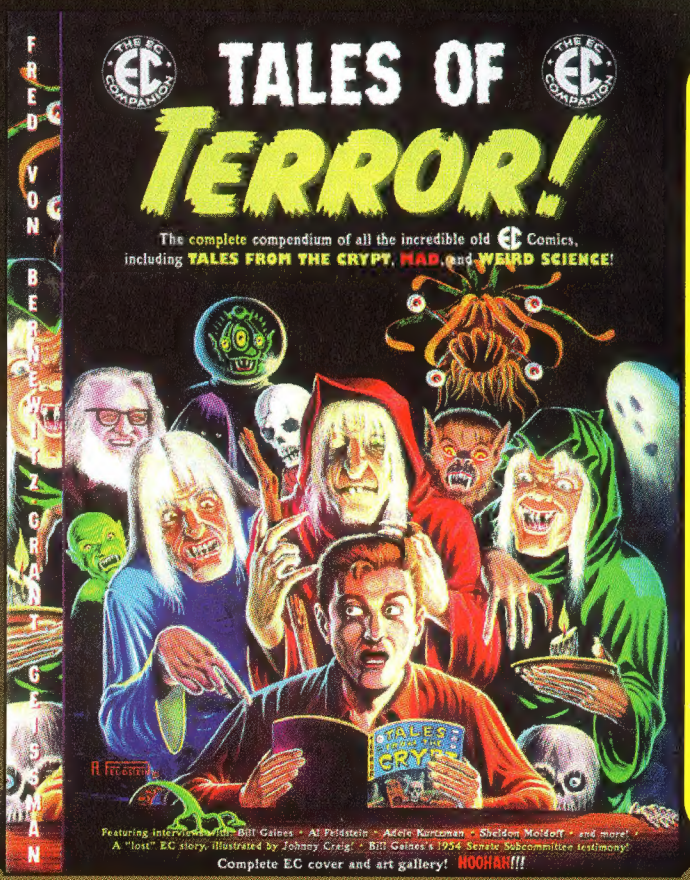
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ON THE COVER: A collage of famous scenes from classic EC stories. Special thanks to Arnie Sawyer for cover concept and design.
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For articles on EC greats Wally Wood, Al Williamson, and George Evans see CBM #44, 51 and 53.

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MAD Memories!

The following is a slightly updated version of the Letter From The Editor published in CBM *#16. The original version was written the morning after Bill Gaines' passing.*

The death of Bill Gaines truly marked the end of an era in comic book history. And for me, it was also the finale of a personal relationship of sorts. So many of my best childhood memories seem somehow associated with recollections of buying the latest copy of *MAD* magazine, that it is still hard for me to accept that its venerable editor and publisher is no longer with us.

I was born late enough to have just missed the EC era, when *MAD* was still a comic book, and of reading age just in time to remember *MAD* in its first four or five years in magazine format. *MAD*'s humor was outlandish and irreverent and, like many, I recall laughing out loud with my young friends at its exaggerated gags. In my experience, that's a quality not too many magazines have. *MAD* was so important to me as a kid that I would often purchase it in lieu of the 2 ½ comics I could have bought for its 25¢ cover price. No matter how much agony was required to whittle the number of comic books down to an affordable number, *MAD* always seemed to somehow make it into the final selection.

And, of course, my parents (like most adults), took a rather dim view of the infamous "satire" magazine. It's amazing to consider that *MAD* was actually the last remnant of a comic book company sometimes accused of single-handedly causing juvenile delinquency in the US... yet always renowned for phenomenal quality. As you might expect, it was that very "adult rejection" of *MAD* that made it truly ours, and helped me and all my kid colleagues to love it just that much more.

I often smuggled my latest copy into Coronado Central Elementary School, knowing full well the potential penalty of confiscation, if my crime were discovered. My young companions and I would read and re-read every page of every issue during recess in a corner of the playground just beyond the eyes of authority. (Even today, most of my copies that survived those playground readings still bear the crease caused by folding the issues lengthwise for easier concealment under my shirt and part way down my pants.)

Between the laughs and giggles, we would actually discuss the meaning of the cartoons and jokes. If one member of our playground discussion group didn't understand why some socially relevant "MAD department" was so funny, the others would quickly explain it. We actually broadened our entire world view... and our place in it... by reading *MAD*.

You see, during the '50s, conformity was, more often than not, the rule. But *MAD* was a literary island refuge where a kid could think for himself. I know it helped me form some of the big questions about what was "accepted" and what was not... and why! More importantly, and unlike most parents, teachers, and other adults that dominated my world, *MAD* let me have my own opinion! In fact it DEMANDED of me an opinion, when most other forums of thought were closed to eight-year-olds.

That's why I saved my copies. Like a treasure chest of beloved toys, my friendly GD and VG stack of *MAD*s was always there, under my bed, each issue at-the-ready for another visit any time the notion struck me.

(Continued on page 6)

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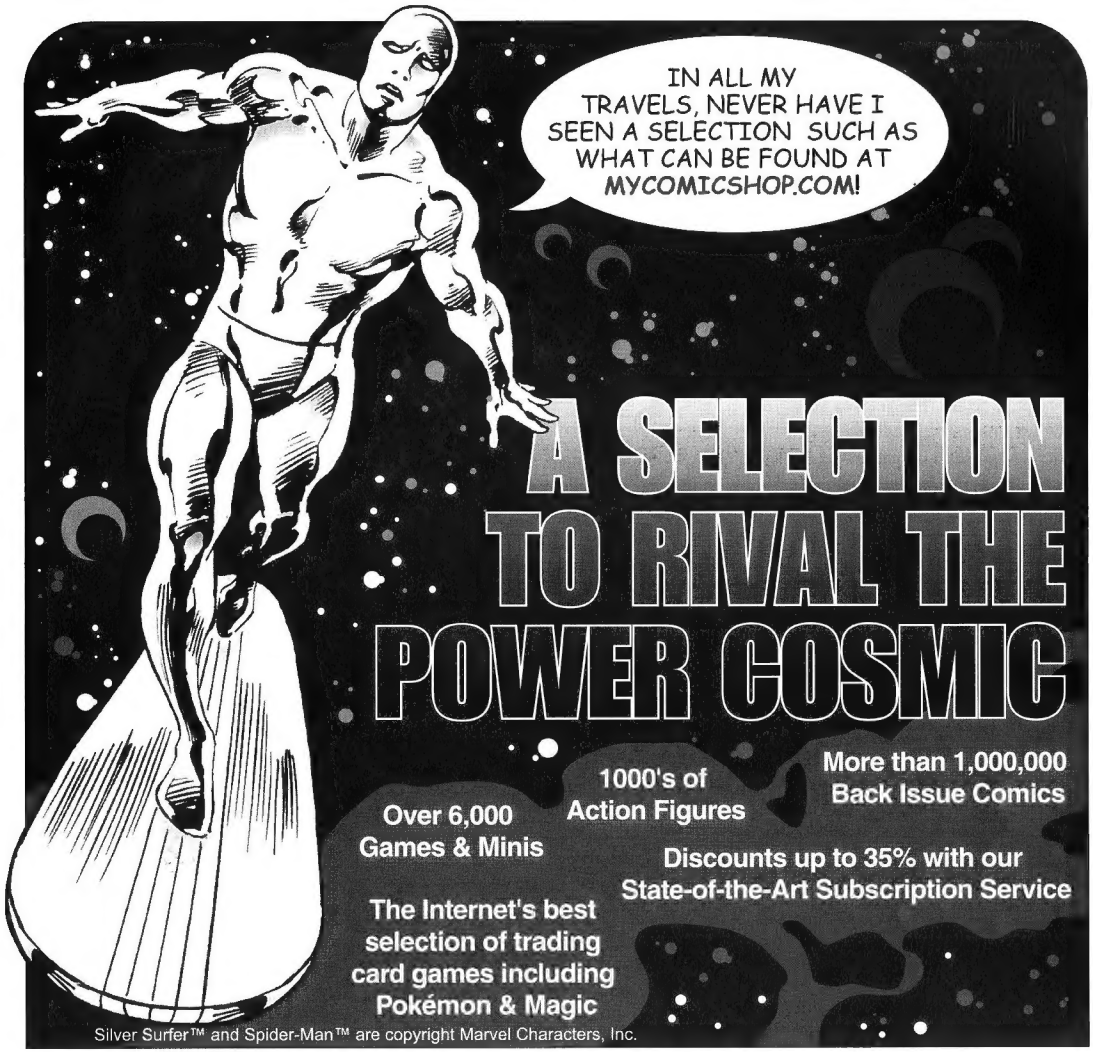
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EDITOR'S PAGE

Continued from page 4

And the artwork... how I loved the artwork! I loved the writing of course, but I just couldn't get over the art in those early years of *MAD*. To a third grader, it was so incredibly complicated. Each issue was such a visual delight, that one reading was never enough to completely absorb every expression and humorous entendré. I especially remember the pages drawn by Wally Wood, with their rich and intricate detail. There were so many rich details on a page that it seemed it might take a whole wonderful and precious childhood hour to digest a single story... or maybe even an entire lazy summer afternoon to make it through from cover to cover!

So after Bruce Hamilton called me tell me of Bill's death, along with the flood of memories, I couldn't help thinking of all the cantankerous, brave, and just plain brilliant elements of Gaines' legacy. I can still visualize him seated in the main committee room of the comic book hearings back in the early '50s, the only publisher to really fight back and debate the subcommittee legislators.

I still admire his consistent refusal to accept advertising in *MAD*, so that he could satirize anything and anyone, in spite of the huge offers from Madison Avenue agencies. And I keep thinking about his anti-smoking gags, long before it was fashionable to educate children about the dangers of cigarettes.

I'd be willing to conjecture that the lives of most male Baby Boomers intersected with *MAD* magazine at some point in their personal development. It's almost as if reading *MAD* was one of the few universal "kid" experiences... perhaps even a rite of passage. I think that is essentially why *MAD* is such an important American institution.

On the occasion of this year's special EC celebration, I invite all of you to join me in remembering Bill Gaines' historic and unparalleled contributions to the medium of panel story telling, 20th century literature, and the timeline of comic book history.

May you fill the holes on your EC want list!

Best,

Gary

Gary M. Carter

MARKETPLACE MAIL

Mike Esposito writes

Let me begin by letting both Mr. Carter and Mr. Murray know what a thrill it was for me to relive that period of my life and career through Will's magazine article. As you know my partnership with Ross spanned many a decade, and many characters, not to mention many publishers! It seems, though, that we are being remembered most for our years together illustrating the adventures of Wonder Woman. It is an honor for our work to be recalled in your magazine, and so special to be recognized with a cover story. My only regret, of course, is that Ross is not here to share our "legendary" status.

You've certainly put together a very smart looking magazine, and I cannot say enough about the quality of the cover reprints. They are, to say the least, stunning. I've always been proud of the Wonder Woman years and finally, my family believes that I did something!

Again, if I can speak for Ross, as your article points out I often did, our hats are off... thank you. Truly Yours,

Mike Esposito, New York

Shelly writes

Thank you for the magazines and the article—came out just great. Also received a warm letter from Roger Hill—I believe that my experiences (like many others) are an important part of comic book history... and should be told. Sincerely,

"Shelly" (Sheldon Moldoff), Florida

Hal Sherman writes

Many thanks for the excellent treatment of "The Hal Sherman Story." I love that opening double spread. It's a beauty! I also appreciate Will Murray's professional handling of the story. The owner of Comic Book Heaven, a large comic book store in White Plains, loved the story. She even had me autograph it. She will have it framed to hang on the wall. And many thanks for the copies of CBM. Many people are waiting for autographed copies.

I have one little unimportant correction. The playing card caricature is not a self-portrait. That drawing was made by Jerry Robinson when we spent time trying to establish a playing card company. Wonder Woman fell into the right hands when she met CBM. Many thanks for handling Wonder Woman so expertly, with loving care. Gary, once again—many thanks! Sincerely,

Hal Sherman, New York

Gravesite covers

Regarding R. Thompson's letter in CBM #77, the book in question is Superman #215. It has a Neal Adams cover of Superman and "Lanie" at Lois's grave at sunset. The title is "Superman's Tragic Marriage." I knew this immediately because one wall of my home office is covered with my favorite Silver Age DC comics. Quite a few of them are Neal Adams or Nick Cardy gravesite covers such as JLA #100 and World's Finest #195 (where Superman and Batman are forcing Robin and Jimmy Olsen to dig their own graves).

Looking over my wall, I recall other DC covers featuring gravesites, tombstones, or funerals, not counting the obvious House of Mystery or Secrets cover. I mean the superhero ones. The Batman cover with Batman looming over the tombstone of Bruce Wayne, the Brave & Bold with Metamorpho's arms growing out of a headstone, or World's Finest #184 with Superman telling Robin that he will have to take over as the deceased Batman's successor, the JLA is standing at Batman's tomb.

Come to think of it, the Silver Age JLA attended an awful lot of imaginary funerals back then, didn't they? It would be interesting (to me, anyway) to hear other readers' thoughts on the subject. What are some of your reader's favorite gravesite covers?

Tom Kelly, Georgia

Unhappy with the Big Boys

Am writing to say how disappointed I am with the product and attitude of two of America's largest comic book dealers.

I have been a collector for almost 40 years now, and for many years have ordered regularly

from dealers in the USA… Harley Yee and Tony Starks to name just two. I have always been very happy with their grading, pricing, and customer relations.

In contrast to Tony and Harley, I recently placed (for the first time) orders with two of the U.S.A.'s largest dealers, the self-proclaimed "Big Boys." I paid 1 1/2x Guide to both companies for NM books and received what I would describe as mid grade books, with a corner piece missing from one book, worn spines on others, and all tanning to browning pages on each and every one.

I contacted both companies, neither of which seemed particularly bothered. I was told by one person that "we do not like books returned and if people complain we would rather not have them as customers."

If this is what to expect from America's two largest dealers, I will stay with the people I know from now on and steer clear of the experts.

S. Williams, Wales, United Kingdom

Not fleece them

Can't recall a time in this glorious hobby of ours, when someone wasn't complaining about the lack of new collectors. "We need new blood!" they exclaim. "The hobby can't continue without new collectors," they lament. As if the majority of we collectors who have supported this hobby over its entire history had suddenly dried up and drifted away.

Of course, the truth of it is that new collectors have been consistently entering the hobby for decades, certainly for the 40-odd years I've been collecting. Remember the speculative boon of the early '90s? Centered around the first Batman movie, and the creative explosion generated by creators taking ownership into their own hands, new collectors bought mass quantities of new comic books from a plethora of start up publishers, as well as from the tried and true standard-bearers, Marvel and DC.

These new collectors were derisively called "speculators." "Get your red hot Valiants, your sizzling Images, your X-Men #1!" cried dealer after dealer. "They're rare!" "Get them while they last!" Never mind that none of these titles was evenly remotely collectable. They certainly didn't pass the litmus test of collecting: demand, condition, and scarcity. Certainly there was some demand. But (and it's a really big "but") they were ALL in condition and they were ALL plentiful. Tens of thousands of Mint condition comic books is enough to satisfy just about any appetite.

This kind of momentum buying happens in just about every market I know. It usually spells disaster, at least for those doing the momentum buying, the newbies not on the inside and not in the know. When these speculators—oops, new collectors—attempted to turn around their now worthless books after the frenzy subsided, they discovered that no one wanted them. The slope gets mighty slippery, and it's tough to grab a toe hold.

The result was speculator after speculator—oops, new collector after new collector—leaving the hobby altogether. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. These mass-produced collectables (comics, beanie babies, whatever) never have any staying power, which is why dealers and experienced collectors have a responsibility to educate the new collector… not fleece them! The simple fact is, we've encouraged generation after generation of new collectors to come and go. It's nobody's fault but our own.

Now, CGC certified books are all the rage. Some speculators—oops new collectors—are buying them at record prices. Others, not. It's really too soon to know and no one has done a definitive survey. All we're hearing is anecdotal evidence about how this slabbed book sold for this record price. That's hardly projectable science. The rub will come after the initial momentum buying slows. After more knowledgeable collectors demand to see the comic, in its entirety, not through the rose-colored prism of a plastic holder.

In the meantime, many of us will sit back and watch this new generation of speculators—oops collectors—in all their splendid agony, wondering what could have been…

Bill Howard, California

Atlas-Seaboard memories

Just finished the Atlas-Seaboard article in issue #77 and I had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed it. I fondly remember buying these books at the pharmacy back when they first came out and wondering how they would fare against the big boys. I ended up splitting a lot of extra firewood for three months trying to earn enough money to afford these books along with the rest of my comic fix. I found the first two issues of the Scorpion ground breaking and still get a kick reading the Targitt books. Having the complete Atlas-Seaboard cover gallery alone paid for CBM #77 in my opinion.

So, when are you going to do the complete history of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents? Bravo, Gary, on another entertaining and informative issue.

Pete Rosengarten, via E-mail

(Continued on page 93)

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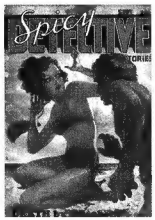

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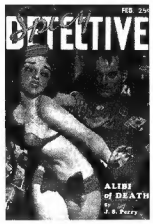

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Forbidden Worlds!

By Pat S. Calhoun

For sheer psychological potency *Forbidden Worlds* was the supreme fantasy comic title. What dark revelations were promised in those two words? What grim wisdom could be gained by the laying down of a dime? The American Comics Group gave some pretty good answers in a run of 145 issues over 16 years. The focus here will be on three early issues from the exemplary pre-Code era when fantasy/horror comics were a major force during the largest-selling years for four-color literature.

Forbidden Worlds #5 (March/April 1952) is—as the cover proclaims—a "giant 52-page" extravaganza with an effective sea-serpent cover that quickly and clearly establishes the genre. Inside, the fun begins with "The Tomb of Terror," a yarn drawn by a good artist who didn't do much work for ACG, Lou Cameron. It's the usual ACG "young couple caught up in ancient supernatural evil" affair, replete with ghosts and demons and a sorcery-haunted castle...

Two of the other four stories are memorable. "Land of the Living Dead" is a less than compelling drama about a man who becomes a ghost while still alive, but the Al Williamson and Roy Krenkel illustration is incredibly intricate and beautiful. And "The Day the World Died" is a pretty fair science fiction tale where an atomic reaction at a nuclear lab opens a dimensional doorway to a world of fiends who have waited for such a moment to attack... Art is by George Carl Wilhelms, who did a fair amount of outstanding work for ACG in a distinctive, richly-textured style.

The other two yarns aren't bad; there's just a little more of a "been there, done that" feel to them. All in all, it's a lot of fantasy for ten cents.

Forbidden Worlds #11 (November 1952) features a classic mummy cover by Ken Bald, who drew most of the ACG covers. And "The Mummy's Treasure" is the lead story—a most amusing effort. The "cop and schoolteacher help kid who has unwittingly unleashed magical menace" plot is enlivened by a witty ending and lurid rendering by a mystery artist that even "super style detective" Jim Vadeboncoeur couldn't identify (although he did help peg a few others)...

"The Clutching Curse" is about a big black cloud that floats around killing people, and a young couple trapped in an old dark house who confront the nebulous engulfing terror. Art is by Charles Quinlan, one of the great "grade B" artists of the Golden Age, who laid claim to such characters as Cat-Man and Captain Fearless—the superhero in the coonskin cap.

Rounding things out (although a three story format is unusual for ACG) is a nine-page nightmare, "The Wax Demons," wherein the spirits of four of history's worst villains are sorcerously placed into wax replicas of the evildoers in a little amusement park museum. Thus Attila the Hun, Jack the Ripper, Mussolini, and ringleader Adolf Hitler band together to "destroy civilization." It's not a great story, but it's bold, and Harry Lazarus adds intense art. The result is entertaining—a solid finish to a solid issue.

Forbidden Worlds #29 (May 1954) is a winner all the way. Bald's cover is clear and creepy; "The Frog-Man" is the lead story inside—looking a lot like the creature on the cover but drawn by old pro Lin Streeter. The plot finale on this one uses the same trick as "The Day the World Died" in issue #5, which makes this a good time to mention ACG's editor and main writer, Richard Hughes. It would be easy enough to believe that he wrote most of the ACG material: the tone and style are consistent and characters and situations occur and reoccur with a wealth of variations on themes...

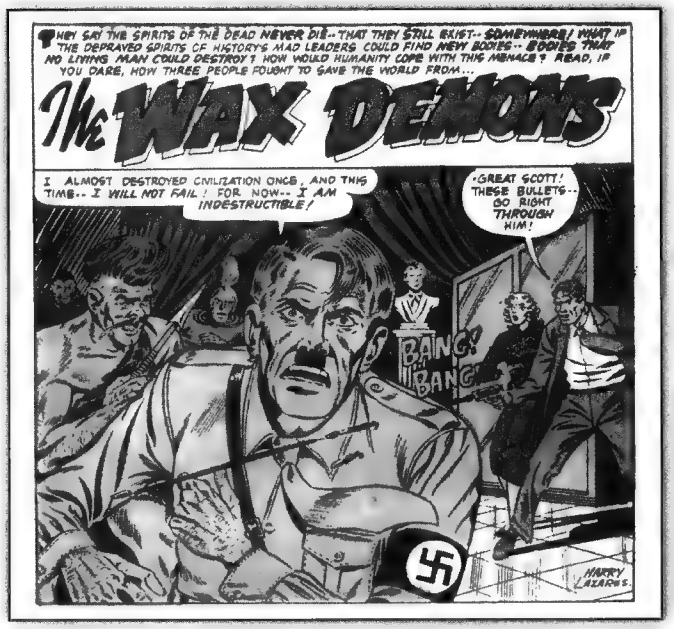
TERROR IN THE SKY
THERE WAS ONLY ONE SANDERS STRATO-STREAK--AND WHEN IT CRASHED, FOUR MEN MET FLAMING DEATH! BUT THAT VERY NIGHT... SOMETHING HAPPENED! THERE WAS THE SCREAM OF JETS AND THE MOCKING LAUGHTER OF THE DEAD-- READY FOR THE FLIGHT THAT MEANT TERROR IN THE SKY!

FORBIDDEN WORLDS © ACG

"Terror in the Sky" is a absorbing weirdie about the owner of a small aircraft company who talks his "old war buddies" into taking their newly-designed plane for a test flight before all the bugs are worked out. They agree to do it if he'll fly with them. Once airborne the boss spots trouble and para-

A good monster cover and 5 fantastic stories—including one illustrated by star artist Kenneth Landau—provide an awesome dose of pre-Code fantasy at its best in FW #29

I DON'T KNOW WHAT SPIRIT WORLD YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...BUT YOU'RE SURE GOING BACK TO IT! AFTER I SHOOT YOU, I CAN TELL THE COPS YOU CAME HERE THREATENING TO KILL ME..AND EILEEN WILL TESTIFY THAT I ACTED ONLY IN SELF-DEFENSE!
RALPH.... L-LOOK!


THEY SAY THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD NEVER DIE-- THAT THEY STILL EXIST-- SOMEWHERE! WHAT IF THE DEPRAVED SPIRITS OF HISTORY'S MAD LEADERS COULD FIND NEW BODIES-- BODIES THAT NO LIVING MAN COULD DESTROY! HOW WOULD HUMANITY COPE WITH THIS MENACE? READ, IF YOU DARE, HOW THREE PEOPLE FOUGHT TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM...
The WAX DEMONS
I ALMOST DESTROYED CIVILIZATION ONCE, AND THIS TIME-- I WILL NOT FAIL! FOR NOW-- I AM INDESTRUCTIBLE!
GREAT SCOTT! THESE BULLETS-- GO RIGHT THROUGH HIM!
BANG! BANG!
HARRY LAZARUS

Two splash panels (previous page and right) showcase the art of Shelly Moldoff and Harry Lazarus and a story panel displays the lush linework of Al Williamson and Roy G. Krenkel. From Forbidden Worlds #29, 11, and 5 respectively.

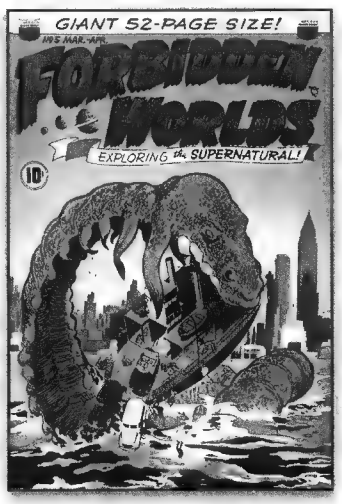
Ken Bald's terrific mummy cover on Forbidden Worlds #11 (Nov 1952), matches the story inside in this winning issue.

EXPLORING the SUPERNATURAL!
FORBIDDEN WORLDS
10
Can the CURSE OF A LONG-DEAD HUMAN STRIKE THROUGH THE AGES? READ THE EXCITING ANSWER IN "The MUMMY'S TREASURE"!
YOU... PAY!

chutes rather than warning the others who crash and die. To say that this yarn ends with payback—in kind—does not require any "spoiler warnings"... but the suspense builds nicely to the ghostly vengeance, and horror maestro Shelly Moldoff puts graphic punch into every panel.

"Tour of Horror" details the downfall of a three-time wife murderer which comes when the slain spirits band together while he is courting his next victim-to-be. It's a familiar story, but it's told well and features vivid art by another unknown artist. In "The Firewalker's Revenge" two Yankee crooks rob and kill a gold merchant in India. But the old man's son is a fakir with mystic powers, and he summons a fire spirit and commands it to pursue the guilty parties and turn them to toast. The demon appears in the lighter's wink for the last cigarette, in the burning brandy of a crepe suzette; so they try to live flame-free, but... This is a good yarn and combined with awesome art by Kenneth Landau they equal excellent four-color fantasy.

The book ends with an unusual three-pager, "Rivals Unto Death," about two women in love with the same man and how one of them goes to a witch to buy her rival's death by black magic. It's a predictable plot, but the short-short doesn't need much suspense, and the art by Bob Forgione packs several stunning scenes into the small package. It should be noted that when a five-story fantasy anthology comic hits the spot five times 'tis a rare and wondrous thing.



ACG started *Forbidden Worlds* in 1951 as a companion mag to their successful *Adventures Into The Unknown*, which was the first continuously-published fantasy/horror title, and both ran together until 1967 when ACG... well... gave up the ghost.

A uncluttered brightly-colored cover, entertaining stories, and some fabulous art make Forbidden Worlds #5 (Mar/Apr 1952) a worthwhile 52-pager.

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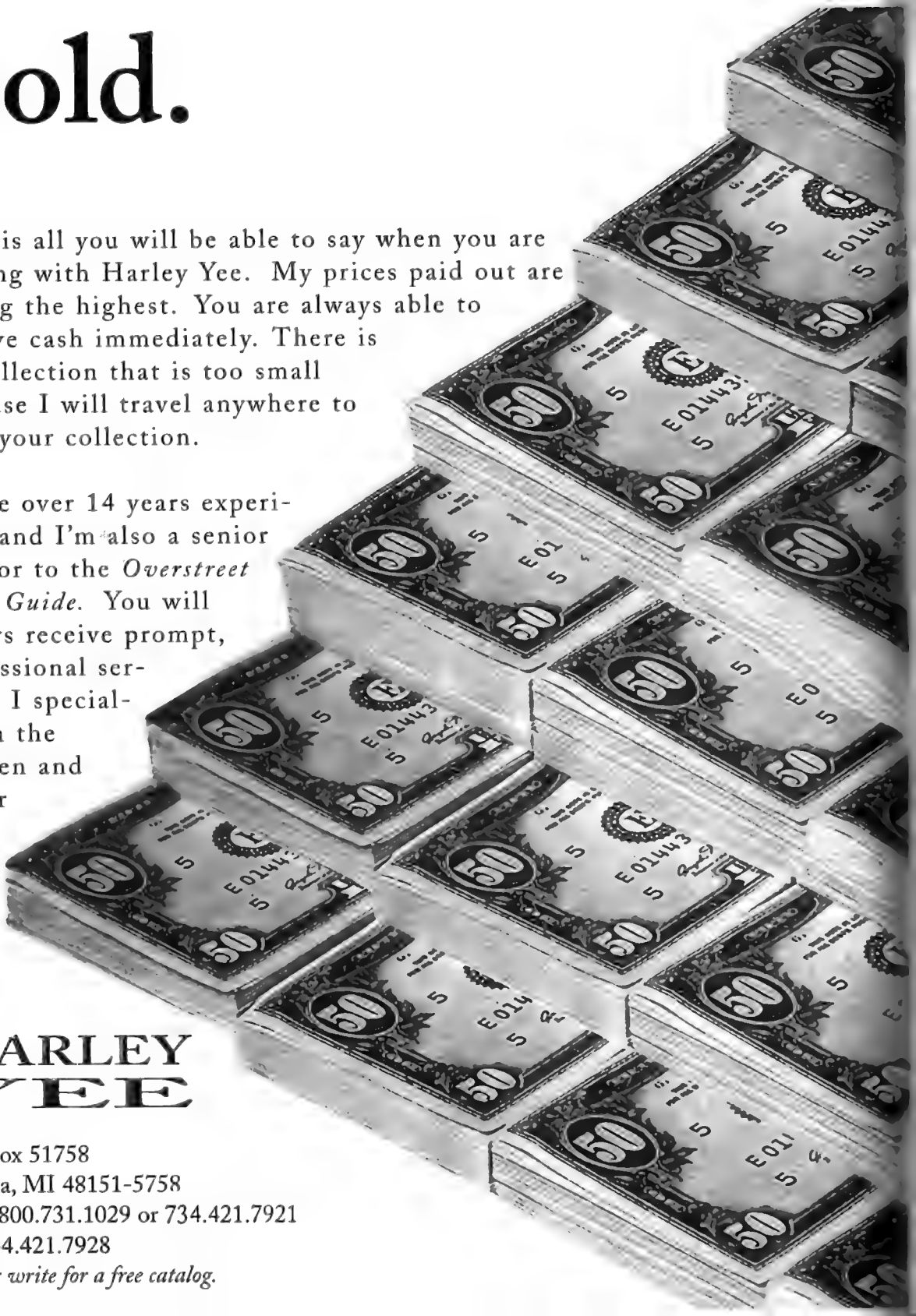

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Osculations of Obscurity

Romance Comics from the Tiny Publishers (PART I)

By Michelle Nolan

Call them the comic books of obscure osculation. That's because, despite the hue and cry over violence in pre-Code comics, kissing was a lot more common than crime... in early romance comics.

Even many of the most minor publishers got in on the art of osculation.

Of the 3,750 romance comics published from the first kiss of the genre in 1947 through the dawn of the Silver Age in 1959—give or take a few that may or may not exist—12 different publishers produced at least 100 issues devoted to romance. Eight generally lesser publishers printed from 42 to 98 issues apiece.

How many other romance publishers did that leave? Would you believe 18?

That's right, 18 other publishers, ranging from influential comic houses such as Hillman, Toby, Archie, EC, Fiction House, and Magazine Enterprises... to truly small folks such as Sterling, PL, Mainline, and Mikeross, observed the rites of osculation, otherwise known as kissing.

As a collector, that's how I differentiate the small-run romance comics—between the issues produced by well-known publishers who only dabbled in dalliances to the truly tiny firms for whom romance was just another rarity.

Many collectors have heard of titles ranging from Fiction House's *Cowgirl Romances*, a 12-issue run which represents the only romance Fiction House ever attempted, to Archie's short-lived *Darling Love* and *Darling Romance*, which were tried at the height of the "Love Glut" in 1950.

But how many collectors have seen copies of titles like *Heart and Soul, Love Life, My Secret Confession, Enchanting Love*, or *Co-ed Romances*? That's the caliber of kissing we're going to look at this time around.

I've always especially enjoyed seeking out these obscure titles, just as I love hunting for seldom-seen comics of all genres. Sometimes I even wonder if any romance titles remain undiscovered. Maybe not, but it's fun to think about.

Actually, there may have been more than 18 publishers of low-run romance, but I combined several titles because the publishers seem at least somehow linked.

For example, there were the comics published by the folks from the Story/Master/Merit group and the comics produced by the people from Gilmor/Stanmor/Key. Likewise, I lumped Artful/Harwell into one group and Youthful/Trojan into another.

The primary thing to remember, though, is that all of these titles apparently received low exposure if not low distribution. Some may not even have received nationwide distribution.

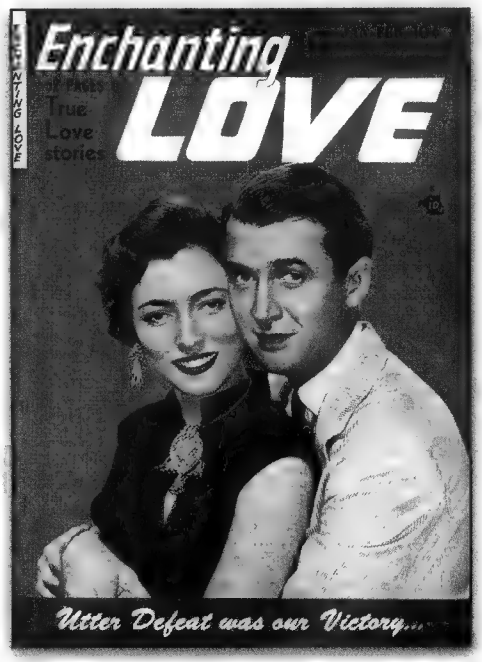
I'll bet not one collector in a hundred (or maybe even a thousand) has ever seen a copy of *Heart and Soul*, which began with #1 (April/May 1954) and ended with #2 (June/July 1954)—at least as far as anyone knows. They were self-published in thoroughly professional corporate style out of good old Sparta, Illinois, by the young Ross Andru and Mike Esposito! The two later went on to fame, fortune, and fun illustrating the likes of *Metal Men* and *Wonder Woman*, among many others, for DC classics.

Heart and Soul was among the few romance comics to include even a phone number in the indicia. For a good time, call CHickering 4-4195!

Folks over 40 might well remember the days when phone numbers began with prefixes and not numbers. It's fun—I honestly can't remember the previous phone number I had about 10 years ago, but I remember my family's number in the 1950s—AXminister 6-8745 (Ye *CBM* editor remembers his, HEmstead 5-6144). I don't know if that reveals any deep psychological truths, but I do know phone numbers once-upon-a-time were easier to remember.

I also recall asking my folks what an AXminister was. Now I'm beginning to wonder about CHickering. Has anyone ever put together a list of the old prefixes?

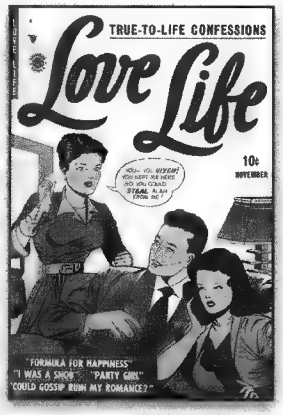
At any rate, it's interesting to note that the indicia to *Heart and Soul* #1 listed the publishers (Andru and Esposito), the general manager and the circulation manager, along with the art director (Esposito) and the script editor (Andru). That might be a record for a 1950s indicia! The second issue, however, listed only the title's edi-



Enchanting Love (Jan/Feb 1950) was produced by Kirby Publishing and featured Jimmy Stewart on the cover

tor: Martin Thall, of whom I know nothing about.

The two issues of *Heart and Soul* closely resemble DC romance comics of the time, which is not surprising since the Andru-Esposito team was doing work for DC at the time. They were distributed by DC's Independent Distributors (with the same logo of North America superimposed with an ID).



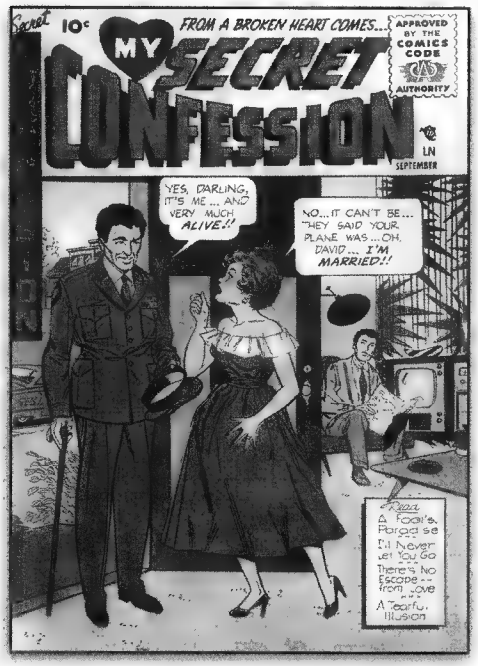
Love Life (Nov 1951) was published by the obscure and almost unknown publisher "PL"

None of the four stories in #1 or three tales in #2 are signed, although Andru and Esposito clearly did some of the art. Two of the titles in #1 are remarkable for their originality ("Gigolo") and their banality ("Second Love").

Can you imagine the Comics Code accepting the title "Gigolo" for a love story? Especially a story that ends with the unshaven, unkempt gigolo drinking alone in a bar, saying "Here's to you, baby! You were right... Ex-Gigolo meets Gigolette... and loses!" while the bartender mutters, "Boy! Why is it my place attracts all the bums!"

Mikeross published seven comics in all, including *Three-D Love* (December 1953) and *Three-D Romance* (January 1954), plus three issues of the *MAD* knockoff *Get Lost*, but their publishing venture occurred at one of the worst possible times in comics history for a new publisher.

Sterling Comics published the esoteric one-shot romance title My Secret Confessions (Sep 1955)


Secret
10¢
FROM A BROKEN HEART COMES...
MY SECRET CONFESSION
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SEPTEMBER
YES, DARLING, IT'S ME... AND VERY MUCH ALIVE!!
NO...IT CAN'T BE... THEY SAID YOUR PLANE WAS...OH, DAVID... I'M MARRIED!!
Dear
A Fool's Forgive
I'll Never Let You Go
There's No Escape from Love
A Tearful Illusion

Let's turn to a pair of truly obscure one-shots turned out in 1951. They listed editorial offices in New York but were printed in Canada. They were typical romance fare of the period, with four ordinary stories in each issue, all with unsigned art of no great distinction. Both covers featured the themes of female rivalry for a man.

It's amazing to me that any copies of these publications remain, since they seem likely to have received low distribution and even lower exposure. Knowing that, however, makes them collectible in my book. Don't you just love knowing you have found an obscure comic, maybe one that not one potential reader in a thousand saw even when it was originally published?

Sterling Comics, the folks who brought you the nifty four-issue superhero title *Captain Flash* and the two-issue horror classic *Tormented*, also did a romance one-shot entitled *My Secret Confession* #1 (September 1955). Romance comics with titles beginning "My... " were, of course, a time-honored tradition primarily exploited by Fox in the 1949-50 period, when the ultimate publisher of four-color sleaze produced no fewer than 19 titles beginning with "My."

However, the title *My Secret Confession* had never been tried. This Sterling one-shot looked very much like an issue from Standard circa 1954, with art and a cover by Mike Sekowsky. One intriguing aspect of *My Secret Confession* is a full-page house ad plugging "The Big 3"—*After Dark*, *Surprise Adventures* and *Captain Flash*. They weren't big enough, though, since *After Dark* folded with #8 (September 1955, the third issue), *Surprise Adventures* with #5 (July 1955, the third issue) and *Captain Flash* with #4 (July 1955).

I doubt whether too many readers of *My Secret Confession* cared about *Captain Flash*. But if they did, can you imagine their frustration in trying to find a comic that had already gone off the stands forever—at least off newsstands that promptly removed their old titles—by the time this house ad ran in *My Secret Confession*?

One of my favorite obscure titles is the only romance comic to come from Premier Magazines, a small, unsung firm that tried to bridge the gap between pre-Code and Code-approved comics. Premier published one of the great generic romance titles, *True Love Confessions*, for 11 issues from 1954 to 1956.

All 11 issues ran the banner "Confessions of Girls in Love," so it was pretty hard not to see this comic was devoted to some heavy duty soul searching. It took me exactly 16 years to find all 11 issues—from the first one I stumbled upon in 1983 to the last one I needed, #1 (May 1954), at a dealer's miscellaneous bin at the San Diego convention in the summer of '99.

The covers of #2-11 featured one primary scene and several small illustrations for the lead story, in a departure from the style of the many other romance comics of the era. Issues #7-11 are post-Code, but the covers for the first six also would have passed the Comics Code with no problems. Many of the stories in #1-6, however, are racy even by pre-Code standards of the period.

The covers of #9-11 are typically terrific work by Kurt Schaffenberger, one of my favorite artists. The first issue has

a nice 7-page Schaffenberger tale. The only other Schaffenberger story in the run of *True Love Confessions* is in #4 (November 1954).

The third issue has a full-page ad from The Sport Book Co. for a volume entitled "The Rocky Marciano Story"—surely just about the strangest ad ever to appear in a romance comic! Part of the explanation: the address is the same for Premier Magazines and The Sport Book Co. I wonder if this ad wasn't plugged in at the last minute when another ad fell through?

I'm fond of the baseball cover on *True Love Confessions* #9 (September 1955) because it's a baseball cover with a romance theme. I have collected more than 150 comics with baseball cover themes (in addition to regular sports comics), and this is one of my favorite baseball covers, especially since Schaffenberger drew it. The story the cover illustrates—"Love Hits a Home Run"—is a real hoot. Our handsome baseball hero's final words are "It's the marriage license I'm going to autograph, darling!"

Another of my favorite little-known romance titles is *Enchanting Love*, which ran six issues in 1949-50 from the totally obscure Kirby Publishing Company in New York. As far as I know, this tiny company had nothing to do with Joe Simon or Jack Kirby, who were busy pumping out romance comics for Crestwood (Prize) during this period. Kirby Publishing's editors were listed as John Augustin and the artist Tex Blaisdell.

Kirby published only one other title—the four-issue run of *Golden West Love*, which became merely *Golden Love* for its final issue. This company published 10 comic books in a nine-month period, all of them devoted to romance, then vanished forever.

All 10 comics from Kirby Publishing featured photo covers, including a nice movie still shot on the cover of #3 (January/February 1950) of the immortal James Stewart and the famed Italian actress Valentina Cortesa from the 1949 film, *Malaya*, which was one of Stewart's most obscure efforts. Cortesa looks like she's ready for a nice, long nap in the grasp of Stewart, who seems to be musing "Lookie what I found!" with a typically wry Stewart smile.

I have located seven of the 10 Kirby comics. They're all 52 pagers, with nice but generally unacknowledged art. An artist signed merely "Gregg" did a nifty centerfold splash to illustrate a western romance entitled "My Heart Became a Wasteland" in #3. Bob Powell did a story in #2, which also features an astonishingly beautiful unsigned splash page of a tidal wave for the lead story, a fine tale of sea-farers entitled "A Slave to Fear."

The last comic to appear from Kirby, *Enchanting Love* #6 (July 1950), had the blurb "A Good Kirby Comic" in the upper-righthand corner, with Good in bold letters, as though the reader was being asked to forgive the previous nine bad Kirby comics. In truth, though, these comics were not bad at all—just obscure.

Simon and Kirby, by the way, also self-published an obscure four-issue title from their short-lived 1954-55 Mainline Publications entitled *In Love*. Comics historian Robert Beerbohm has recently handsomely profiled this series and other Mainline comics in great depth. Like *Heart and Soul* from Andru and Esposito, *In Love* was published at just about the worst possible time for a new comic to hit the stands—right at the height of the controversy leading to the Comics Code.

There are too many of these little-known romance comics to cover in one article (and Ye Editor warned me earlier that this issue is packed with EC material), so look for the second installment in the next *CBM*. In the meantime, be careful of those obscure osculations!

ROMANTIC THRILLS OF THE
Heart and Soul
APR. MAY
10¢
DARLING, I HAD TO COME BACK... THE PAST DOESN'T COUNT ANY MORE! I CAN'T GO THROUGH WITH THE DIVORCE ...I'M NO GOOD WITHOUT YOU...
5E
ANDRU and ESPOSITO

Heart and Soul (#1 Apr/May 1954, above) was self-published by Andru and Esposito's company Mikeross. It was among the few romance comics to include a phone number in the indicia

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Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from 1940s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950s comic books in the United States and has contributed volumes of data to the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide.

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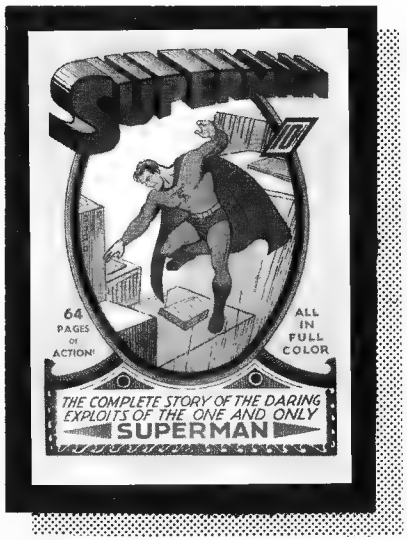

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Horror Man!

The 70-year writing career of Frank Belknap Long

By Will Murray

One of the most important comic book writers of all time was a guy, who if you ever heard of him, you'd never in a million years connect him with the field.

Frank Belknap Long had a remarkable 70-year writing career. From his first sale to *Weird Tales* in 1924 to his last short stories in *Twilight Zone* and other modern magazines, he was one of the stellar horror and SF writers of the pulp era.

Long is equally famous for his longtime friendship with *the* horror writer of the 20th century, H. P. Lovecraft (sorry Stephen King!). His "Hounds of Tindalos" and "The Horror in the Hills" are considered classic early contributions to Lovecraft's infamous and still popular Cthulhu Mythos.

Lovecraft, who died in 1937, privately worried that his young protégé was walking down the thorny path to utter hackdom. Little did he dream.

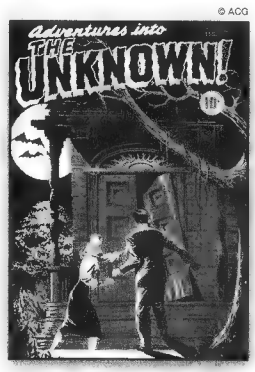
Over the course of his career, Long wrote just about everything from cheapie horror tales for a *Weird Tales* imitator called *Thrilling Mystery* to, believe it or not, a *Man from Uncle* novel. In the early 1940s, he descended to the abyss called comic books.

Unearthing Frank Belknap Long's comic career is a hopeless task. All you can hope to dig up are mouldering disconnected bones. The entire skeleton has been lost. We know what we do know thanks to a Long fan named Perry Grayson who dug through Long's letters to fellow *Weird Tales* writer and founder of Arkham House, August Derleth, and revealed all in *Other Dimensions*.

"I got in on the ground floor in this field (I wrote some stuff for Superman and Fawcett as early as 1940)," Long told Derleth in a 1946 letter, "and though I've by no means completely mastered the medium I've acquired an intuitive grasp of the essentials which serves me in good stead today." Long admitted to having contributed to *Planet Comics, Captain Marvel, Green Lantern*, and writing Congo Bill. After WWII, he hooked up with B.W. Sangor's shop, Cinema Comics, which was supplying scripts and art to Ned Pines' Standard Comics as well as publishing comics of its own. Long probably made this connection through Pines, who published *Thrilling Mystery* and other pulps Long wrote for. Pines was Sangor's father-in-law.

After working on unidentified scripts for a year at Cinema, Long told Derleth in a November letter circa 1947-48, "The entire comic book field has taken a nose dive, and the group just couldn't continue to employ four staff writers at the salary I was getting. As I was the newest addition to the staff, they had to ask me to take a layoff in August. They are merely retaining one staff writer, a man who has been with them for years. They were anticipating a tremendous post-war boom in the field which failed to materialize and simply had to retrench."

The surviving writer is without doubt Richard E. Hughes, creator of the Black Terror and Pyroman–later editor and head writer for ACG. It was Hughes who later turned to Long to help him launch one of the seminal titles in comics history. The bombshell revelation is contained in letter to Derleth written around Halloween 1948.



"Suppose you saw the first issue of *Adventures into the Unknown*. I wrote the entire contents, including the short stories. Second issue… is just about to reach the stands. 'Kill Puppets, Kill' is probably my best comic book story to date, in the weird genre. It's as mature as the medium permits at its present state of development."

Adventures into the Unknown of course is the first continuing horror comic. Modeled after the *Thrilling Mystery* pulp formula, it triggered the great wave of horror comics that led directly to the sublime glories of EC Comics on one hand and the real-life horrors of Fredric Wertham and the Comics Code on the other.

Think of it. One of the top pulp horror writers kicks off the entire wave of comic book horror that would forevermore change the face of comics.

Even more shocking, Long's letters reveal that *AITU*, which didn't give up the ghost until 1967, was for all its sales success very nearly cancelled in the first year!

"The editor of that comic book ghost story magazine knows all about Arkham House–has a great deal of respect for every book you put out (and has read most of your own books), and had even more respect for your critical judgement," Long revealed to Derleth on November 3, 1948. "Now–the owner of the magazine group is thinking about dropping *Adventures Into the Unknown* entirely. The recent attacks on all comic books have given him the jitters."

Long implored Derleth to pen a letter commenting favorably on *AITU*: "The thing is–I'd like to see the magazine go on, not only because the editor is a swell guy and has stuck out his neck on it, in a way, but I feel that a magazine of that type does no harm, and does increase popular interest in the weird, even though on a sub-literary level. And of course I do enjoy writing for it, although that is a minor fact with me now, as I have another more assured connection in the field."

Derleth fired off a letter–and it worked.

"This is a fine stunt!" Long enthused a few weeks later. "Your letter re: the comic book matter was just what the prescription called for and it not only saved the patient, but was probably a deciding factor in the decision to carry on." Long's other connection was probably Julie Schwartz at National Comics. Long also gave insight into how risky and rewarding the *AITU* launch really was: "Extraordinary as it may seem, the magazine has sold very well indeed! It has vindicated the editor's judgement right up to the hilt. He believed that the real old-style ghost story, with the chill factor stressed to the utmost, would have a tremendous appeal to kids and adults alike. He felt that it would reach a much larger and slightly different audience, and was not deterred by the fact that pulp magazines in the weird field do not hit an impressive circulation high."

The irony of Frank Belknap Long's major contribution to the comics field is that after launching and then saving *AITU* from disaster in its formative months, he soon moved on, leaving it to other writers to reap the benefits of his trailblazing.

We're here to celebrate the 50 years of what most collectors believe is the greatest Atom Age publishing company ever to print a comic... EC! While other publishers produced terrific work during those fabulous pre-Code years, EC stands supreme as the one that made comics "adult" entertainment and moved the medium to new heights of excellence.

There were war stories that probed the futility of war... science fiction stories that tackled racial problems... crime stories that showed how sometimes the bad guys are the ones in the blue suits... and satire that made us all laugh out loud. These were the fruits of writer/editor/artist Al Feldstein and publisher Bill Gaines, who wrote stories to please themselves rather than for the perceived marketplace. And they gathered artists who worked in individualistic styles, instead of conforming to "house" rules. The EC roster, Craig, Ingels, Wood, Kurtzman, Kamen, Crandall, Krigstein, Williamson, Davis, Elder, Orlando, Evans, Severin, and the rest of Bill G's EC gang... all take their rightful place in the comic book history hall of fame! So sit back, relax and enjoy our extended EC tribute in this special 96-page issue of *CBM*....

HI! I GOT SOME REAL FIRST-HAND MATERIAL FOR MY NEXT JOB!
JOE Orlando
DICK SMITH
B. Krigstein
GIRLS GIRLS
HELLO! HELLO!
Ingels
WHAT'S THAT, LITTLE BOY? YOU DON'T HAVE A DOLLAR. CAN YOU MAIL IN YOUR... MOTHER?
JOE! YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO CAPE COD!
BOB
GLORIA ORLANDO
NANCY SIEGEL
LOOK, SEVERIN, I'LL TRADE YOU A NIEUPORT FOR TWO DRAGOONS!
EVANS
DRAWED BY "LIL' M. SEVERIN"

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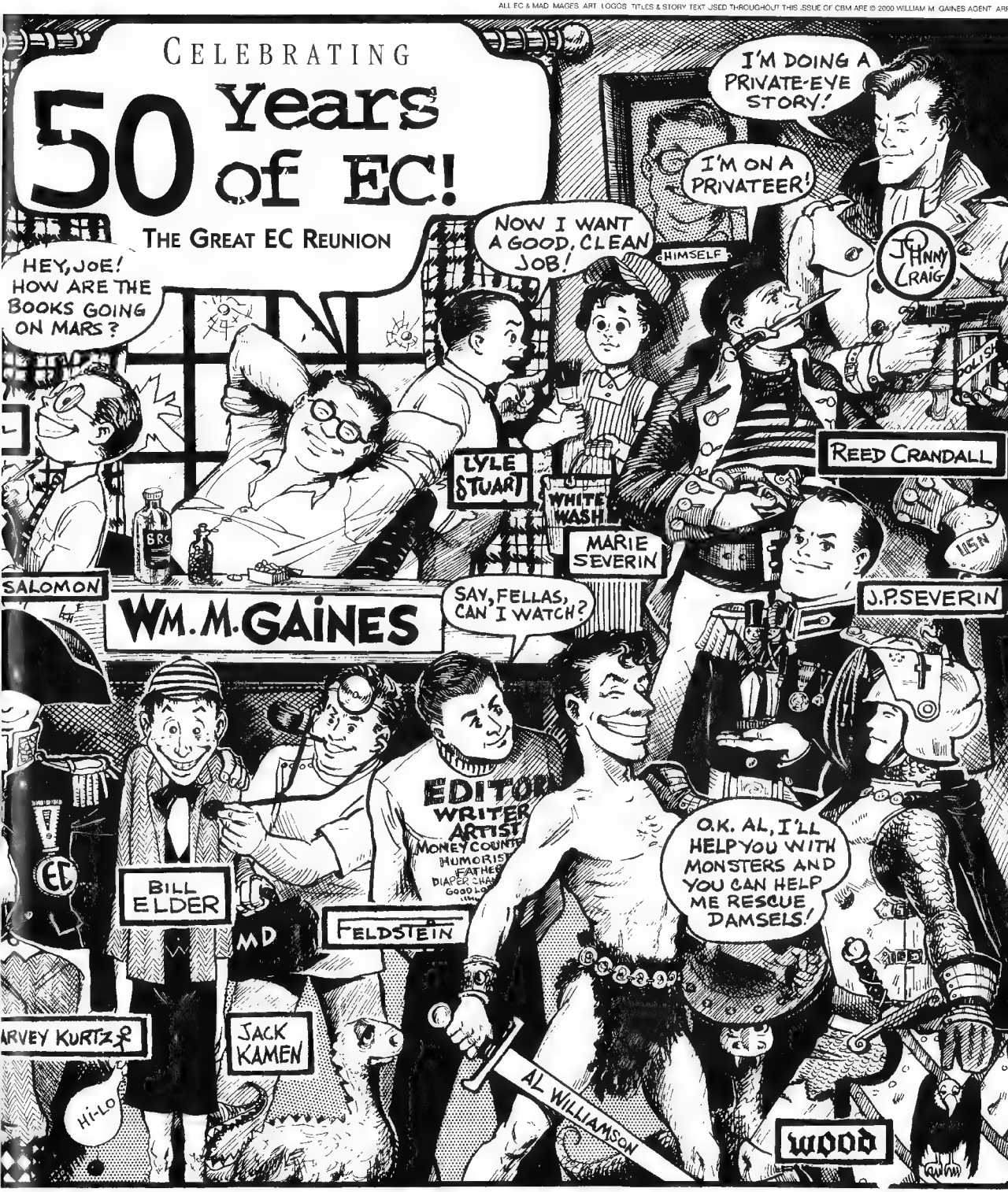


ALL ARTIST CARICATURES THROUGHOUT THIS ISSUE ARE MARIE SEVERIN ORIGINALS.

NOT-SO-GHASTLY GRAHAM INGELS

BY ROGER HILL

This article concerns a series of events that took place between September 27, 1987, and April 4, 1991. This latter date was, as Don McLean used to sing "the day the music died." Or, to be more specific, that's the day Graham Ingels passed away in a Florida hospital at the age of 75. Of all the artists who worked for the famous Entertaining Comics Group (EC) during the 1950s, Graham Ingels was the only one who remained a man of mystery to his countless fans right up until the time of his death. This gentle, mild-mannered master of horror illustration—more affectionately known to EC Fan-Addicts and comics fandom as "Ghastly"—is best remembered for his significant contributions to EC's highly respected line of horror comics produced between 1950 and 1956.

Graham Ingels' penchant for incredibly detailed scenes is evident in "Horror! Head... it Off!" (THIS PAGE) originally published in *Tales from the Crypt* #27 (Dec/Jan 1951-52)

The icon of *Haunt of Fear* was Ingels' version of the Old Witch (LEFT) shown here introducing the story "A Little Stranger" in *HOF* #14 (Jul/Aug 1952)

"Ghastly" Graham Ingels set a visual precedence with his unique style of illustration, becoming EC's most popular horror artist.
GHASTL
AN ENTERTAINING
EC
COMIC

GRAHAM INGELS

Working for such titles as *The Haunt of Fear, The Vault of Horror*, and *Tales From the Crypt*, Ingels set a visual precedence with his unique style of illustration, eventually becoming EC's most popular horror artist. His imaginative portrayals of "The Old Witch"—the popular female member of EC's three ghoulunatic horror hosts—provided humorous introductions to a variety of horror stories featuring some of the most memorable vampires, werewolves, axe murderers, grave robbers, circus freaks and—his specialty—revenging walking corpses to ever appear in the comics.

... AND SWUNG OPEN THE DOOR... AND SCREAMED...
E-E-E-

The vampire bats get big in "Blood Type 'V'!" from *Tales from the Crypt* #22 (Feb/Mar 1951)

erally considered to be the finest horror painting that Ingels ever produced.

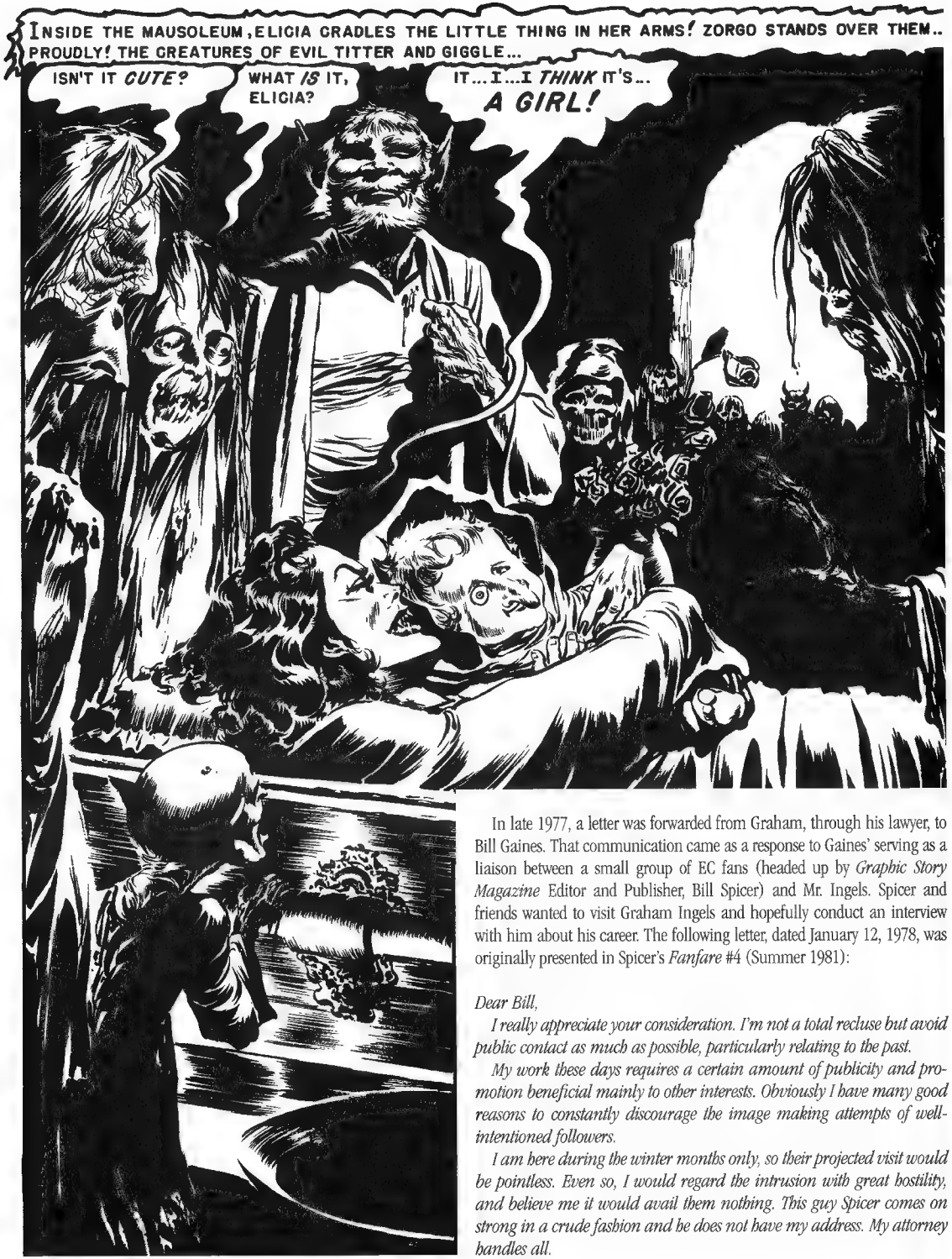
After EC comics were "shut down" with the emergence of the Comics Code Association in the mid 1950s, Gaines converted *MAD* from the comic format to a slick 25¢ magazine and went on to greater profits. Unfortunately Graham Ingels was left without a job. He freelanced for a while doing historical jobs for *Classics Illustrated* and *Treasure Chest* between 1957 and 1959, and taught oil painting classes out of his home studio on Long Island. Around 1959 he accepted a job as an instructor with the Famous Artists School in Westport, Connecticut. One day in 1962 he simply left and never returned to his job or his family. No one seemed to know his whereabouts, or if he was even still alive.

In 1972 at the EC Fan-Addict Convention in New York City, Graham Ingels was honored by his many fans by being voted "Favorite EC Horror Artist." Along with that, an award was also given him for "Horror We? How's Bayou?" (*Haunt of Fear* #17, February 1953) voted "Best Horror Story." Of the many EC artists in attendance at the convention, Graham Ingels was not to be found. His awards were accepted on his behalf by EC/*MAD* publisher, William M. Gaines.

For the next few years rumors circulated among fandom about Ingels' disenchantment with the comic book business just before he left the field. Word had it that Ingels was living somewhere in Florida, opting for seclusion away from any contact with comics fandom or his past family life. In 1977, Bill Gaines located Graham Ingels living and working in Florida. He was teaching classes in oil painting once again and revealed to Gaines that he was happy and enjoying his work. This discovery, when announced by Gaines, was great news indeed to the many fans and other artists who appreciated Ingels' contributions to the comics. It was a relief just to know that the "Master of Macabre" was still alive and apparently doing okay.

That was the good news; shortly followed by the bad news. The bad news being that even though Ingels had a huge following in the comics field, he no longer had any interest in comics, and really didn't want to be bothered with any of it. He didn't want to be reminded about his past involvement with comics. He lived in a very private life and basically wanted it kept that way. His home address and unlisted phone number were well-guarded at the time and even Gaines could only get in touch with Graham through his lawyer in Florida. Many fans had hoped for years that once Graham Ingels was located, he might consent to an interview about his work in the comics, or even shed a little bit of light on his current work.

It was relayed, from Gaines, that Ingels had been doing paintings of historical Florida settings. Some of these were created as large murals that decorated the walls of banks near where he lived. He also painted portraits and produced nine historical paintings for a proposed set of limited edition prints. It appeared that Graham Ingels had become recognized as a "fine artist" by local art communities in Florida.


INSIDE THE MAUSOLEUM, ELICIA CRADLES THE LITTLE THING IN HER ARMS! ZORGO STANDS OVER THEM.. PROUDLY! THE CREATURES OF EVIL TITTER AND GIGGLE...
ISN'T IT CUTE?
WHAT IS IT, ELICIA?
IT... I...I THINK IT'S... A GIRL!

In late 1977, a letter was forwarded from Graham, through his lawyer, to Bill Gaines. That communication came as a response to Gaines' serving as a liaison between a small group of EC fans (headed up by *Graphic Story Magazine* Editor and Publisher, Bill Spicer) and Mr. Ingels. Spicer and friends wanted to visit Graham Ingels and hopefully conduct an interview with him about his career. The following letter, dated January 12, 1978, was originally presented in Spicer's *Fanfare* #4 (Summer 1981):

Dear Bill,

I really appreciate your consideration. I'm not a total recluse but avoid public contact as much as possible, particularly relating to the past.

My work these days requires a certain amount of publicity and promotion beneficial mainly to other interests. Obviously I have many good reasons to constantly discourage the image making attempts of well-intentioned followers.

I am here during the winter months only, so their projected visit would be pointless. Even so, I would regard the intrusion with great hostility, and believe me it would avail them nothing. This guy Spicer comes on strong in a crude fashion and he does not have my address. My attorney handles all.

I will be most grateful if you block any further inquiry and appreciate so much your concern and the trouble you've taken.

Best wishes and happiness, thanks,
Graham

Regards to the old gang! I have many gratifying thoughts of our relationship, Bill, and your graciousness at Christmas time.

As one can conclude from this letter, Graham wanted no part of being visited by fans, especially in regards to the past. We already knew that Graham wasn't a total recluse because Gaines had previously told us about Graham teaching classes in watercolor and oil painting. From the little P.S. at the tail end of the letter, we could tell that he at least still had fond memories of Bill and the "old gang!" Sadly, the main message conveyed in this letter was that the master horror illustrator definitely wanted to be left alone.

The years rolled by and even though several longtime EC fans eventually learned of Ingels' address and wrote to him, no positive responses were received from Graham. On September 27, 1987, I sent Graham off a four-page typed letter. I had spent a full month composing the letter and fine tuning it to where I hoped it might strike a nostalgic nerve with Graham and get a response out of him. Naturally, I told him what a big fan of his I was, and how I had mainly collected EC comics and artwork for many years.

I also mentioned that I had met or corresponded with just about all the other EC artists, including Reed Crandall, who lived here in Wichita for many years. I even included a reproduction of the drawing of Graham Ingels at his drawing board that Crandall had drawn for an issue of *Squa Tront*. (Reed had used the only image of Graham that anyone had ever seen, the photo used for the EC "Artist of the Issue" series published on the inside covers of EC comics in 1951-52.)

I had decided to fashion the letter so that it read almost like an article about Graham's career, and thereby might just touch a nostalgic cord with him. I covered his career before, during, and after EC. I even laid out this four-page letter with little images of the "Old Witch" (taken from various EC horror stories) sprinkled about, the new word balloons above her head, saying things like "Remember me Graham?" or "How about a call Graham?" In looking back on it now, it may have been a bit too "cornball" to approach him that way. I ended the letter by asking Graham to call me collect on the phone and just talk with me for a few minutes.

For three weeks after I sent the letter off to him, I stayed home, close to the phone during evening hours, hoping for a call. I had sent the letter by certified mail and did receive back a receipt signed by Graham. Not too surprisingly, Graham never called. But at least I felt much better for having conveyed to him my feelings about his art in the comics.

I'M ALIVE! I USED DRUGS TO SIMULATE DEATH. THE DOCTOR THOUGHT I WAS DEAD OF THE PLAGUE ... HARDLY EXAMINED ME! OH, I THOUGHT IT ALL OUT... SO CAREFULLY! I'LL GO BACK TO MY COFFIN... AND BE IN THE SHALLOW TRENCH! BUT FAYE WILL FREE ME ...
5

In September of 1988, a few fans did receive letters from an art agent in Florida offering several of Ingels' original paintings for sale. All the paintings offered were scenes of historical Florida and were quite good, both in composition and color. As a matter of fact, they were more than good, they were incredible! Prices were fairly reasonable ranging from $1,800 to $6,500 for large finished oils and $150 to $800 for comprehensive preliminaries. Apparently the subject matter just didn't appeal to the fans and no paintings were sold within fandom.

YOU WISHED ME ALIVE... AND I AM ALIVE... ONLY I'VE BEEN EMBALMED ALREADY! I HAVE NO BLOOD! MY VEINS AND ARTERIES ARE FILLED WITH FORMALDEHYDE!
7

ABOVE:
"The Killer in the Coffin" from *Haunt of Fear* #16 (Jul/Aug 1950)

PANEL AT LEFT:
A closeup of terror in "Wish You Were Here" *Haunt of Fear* #22 (Nov/Dec 1953)

FACING PAGE:
The Old Witch is born in "A Little Stranger" *Haunt of Fear* #14 (Jul/Aug 1952)

I called the agent and inquired if there was any pamphlets or photos available of Mr. Ingels, hoping for some sort of brochure that had been prepared by the gallery. The agent told me she would check into it, and a week later I received a list of available paintings, along with a short note telling me that nothing was available (information-wise) on Graham Ingels.

And so it remained until that fateful day, April 27, 1989,

when a phone call came into the offices of Russ Cochran—EC Comics reprint publisher—in West Plains, Missouri. Angie, Russ's secretary and gal Friday, answered the call. She put the caller on hold and gave a yell to Russ, who was just around the corner in his office area. "Russ, there's a Mr. Ingels on the phone who would like to speak with you."

Russ, hearing this, immediately thought to himself, "sure, ha, it's probably Bill Spicer or Roger Hill playing a little joke on me." Russ then proceeded to pick up the phone and said, "Hi Ghastly, how's it going?" With a deep, smooth, baritone voice, the reply on the other end came back... "Hello, this is Graham Ingels calling."

A MOODY PANEL of shadow and light from the Ingels' classic "Horror We? How's Bayou?" *Haunt of Fear* #17 (Jan/Feb 1953)

After a few quick coughs and chokes, and words of apology for having answered the phone so haphazardly, Russ explained to Graham that after so many years of trying to get a response from Mr. Ingels, and most of Russ's friends knowing this, he had assumed someone was having a little bit of fun with him when the call came in.

A HEADY COMMENT (heh, heh) from "Horror! Head... It Off!" *Tales from the Crypt* #27 (Dec/Jan 1951-52)

Graham proceeded to inform Russ that he had already called Bill Gaines earlier in the day to "check out Russ Cochran." It turns out that Russ had also written a letter to Graham a month or so earlier, suggesting the idea of having him do some paintings dealing with different themes of horror, which Russ could put up for sale in his EC original art auctions. Graham indicated that he was not all that excited about doing horror again and said he'd prefer *not* putting the Old Witch character into any of the paintings. After a lengthy conversation, Russ finally convinced him that it would be a good idea to include her in the first few paintings. Russ estimated that each piece would probably fetch as much as $5,000-10,000 at auction.

Graham finally agreed to do a painting, which he said would probably measure 24 x 30 or even 30 x 40 inches in size. He let Russ know in no uncertain terms that he expected to maintain a certain amount of creative freedom over each painting, if he continued doing them. He also told Russ that he didn't go by the "Ghastly" name anymore and all paintings would be signed "Graham Ingels."

There was also some discussion about doing limited edition, signed prints of the paintings. Graham seemed receptive to the idea. The conversation ended with an agreement that Graham would work up a color comprehensive of an idea and send it to Russ. Then they would discuss it further during their next phone call.

The only reason I remember all of these events so precisely is because I took good notes that evening of April 27, when Russ called me to tell me about it. I, of course, was very happy to hear the news. Russ informed me that he had asked Graham if he would be willing to eventually answer some questions about his work and career. Graham had agreed to that, but quickly added that only if the questions did not hit on certain aspects of his personal life.

Russ had already called and informed Bill Spicer of this news and had asked Bill to put together a list of questions that he would want included in an interview, if and when the chance came. Russ asked me to do the same, which I also agreed to. I asked Russ, when the time came to go to Florida to conduct the interview, if it would be possible for me to accompany him and help out on the project.

I reminded him that I had an extensive collection of Ingels' published work, before and after EC, which would be useful for such an occasion. I knew that if we could sit there and show Graham images of his old work (which he probably hadn't saved), it would almost certainly inspire him to remember details that he normally wouldn't have recalled without it.

The idea sounded okay with Russ, but he said he wasn't going to rush Graham into it right away. Russ's impression was that Ingels was a little apprehensive about the whole thing, and didn't want to pressure him for fear of losing the whole deal. I agreed with Russ totally. We wanted some paintings!

On May 30, I called Russ again to find out what had developed so far on the color rough from Ingels. I was surprised to

IF A CHICKEN CAN LIVE ON WITH ITS HEAD REMOVED, M'SIEU LUGERE... THEN WHY NOT A HUMAN BEING? EH?
YOU'RE MAD! YOU'RE TRYING TO FRIGHTEN ME! BAH! FOOLISHNESS!
5

learn that he had received not only one, but three color roughs from Ingels just a few days earlier, and indicated that there were some problems with them that hopefully could be worked out before the final painting was completed. It turned out that Ingels had called Russ back a week after the first phone call in April and told him that even though he was going ahead with the paintings, he had decided he didn't want any publicity or interviews until after that first painting sold at auction. As far as the "Old Witch" was concerned, Graham told Russ he didn't want to paint her shroud or clothing in red, but instead use a brown or beige color.

Also, in the EC comics published during the 1950s, the Old Witch's bulging eyeball was always on her right. Apparently, Graham had now decided to alternate the bulging eye from right to left. Ingels also said he really didn't want to include any of those nasty little creatures that he used to conjure up during the EC days. Russ explained to him that he was famous for doing those sort of characters, but Ingels was adamant about it and there was no changing his mind at the time. Russ told me that Graham was pretty touchy when it came to suggestions about his artwork, and said discussing these things with Ingels was like walking on eggshells. He had to be careful what he said.

I asked Russ if we could finalize a date for my visit to West Plains to look through some of the EC art which was slated for a upcoming auction on July 10-11. At the same time, I could look at the Ingels color roughs and discuss some of the problems with Russ. I hoped to give him some helpful input. We set up the visit for the following Friday, June 2.

Russ said that he was supposed to have called Graham after receiving the color roughs, but had put if off until he had more time to study the art and plan what he was going to say to him. I could tell Russ was somewhat nervous about calling Ingels. He told me he might even call Graham while I was there on Friday, after we had a chance to discuss the roughs. Needless to say, I was all for that idea.

It was another hot summer day as my old '76 Chevy Impala rolled into the quiet little town of West Plains, located in the southern part of Missouri. Throughout the entire drive, visions of Ingels paintings had been spinning through my mind. I was about to see something that I thought would never happen. The return of Graham Ingels!

Within minutes I was going to see new paintings of the Old Witch, created by the master horror illustrator who had made her famous during the '50s. Ingels was at this time 74-years-old. Where did he get his energy from?

EC'S MOST MEMORABLE rodents appeared in "A Grim Fairy Tale" *Vault of Horror* #27 (Oct/Nov 1952)

THE SQUIRREL, THE DOG... AND... GASP...
...IT SAT ON ITS HAUNCHES... GRINNING AT ANITA! IT LOOKED ALMOST ALIVE...
IT... IT COMPLETES MY COLLECTION, ANITA!
JONAH! YOU... YOU KILLED MY CAT!

The timing of this was pretty incredible too. Russ had just completed auctioning off all of the EC New Trend art and things were beginning to settle down when Ingels contacted him. I knew these paintings would create some new excitement for the auctions. But above all else, the real excitement for me, and many other fans, was the simple fact that the greatest horror comic artist of all time had resurfaced. He wasn't allowing

After reading "Collection Completed" in *Vault of Horror* #25 (Jun/Jul 1952), comic hobbyists look pretty good...

any interviews yet, but at least he'd taken the first step and agreed to create some paintings.

Russ greeted me in his usual friendly manner and after a quick lunch we proceeded to his office to look over the Ingels roughs. Russ pulled the originals from a shelf and held them up one by one. It was a moment of hyperventilation I shall never forget. I couldn't get over the fact that I was staring at brand new horror imagery by Graham Ingels. There she was... the Old Witch herself, staring back at me with that bulging eyeball, looking like she had just stepped out of the '50s. Even though her cloak was beige and her eye was on the wrong side in a couple of them, I thought the roughs looked pretty good.

Yes, perhaps Graham had painted them using too rich a palette, but as Russ and I discussed them, we both realized that Ingels would have to ease back into it. The question was whether or not Russ could help guide Graham in the right direction without upsetting him too much. Nothing had been finalized yet on what the final completed painting would depict.

So for the next hour or so, Russ and I sat there in his office discussing many different aspects of the roughs, of Ingels doing paintings, and the possibility of limited edition prints of those paintings. While we talked, Russ made a few notes on a pad of paper. These were things he wanted to discuss with Ingels during the next phone conversation. Russ had decided to call Graham with me sitting there and, as long as I kept very quiet, he would let me listen to his conversation. Naturally I was very excited about that and I had my notepad in hand, ready to write any details for history. I wanted to capture as much of this conversation as I could for posterity.

Suddenly, the phone rang. Russ's secretary, Angie, intercepted the call as usual. The next thing I heard was Angie's voice saying, "Russ, Graham Ingels is on line one for you!"

I looked at Russ, he looked at me and said... "Well Rog, looks like we're going to talk to him right now." I quickly asked Russ to put Ingels on the squawk box speaker located on top of his desk. He hit a button, leaned forward and said "Hello Graham."

A voice came back through the intercom speaker, "Hi Russ, just thought I'd call and see if you received the color roughs okay in the mail?" Over the next two years, Graham Ingels would complete ten color roughs and four larger, finished, Old Witch paintings for the Cochran auctions. The color roughs always started out with a minimum bid of $1,000 and sold for as much as $2,100. The four finished paintings each had a reserve of $5,000 and the highest price realized on any one painting was $7,500. The first Cochran auction to include Ingels' paintings was #39, which took place on Oct. 31, 1989. The last paintings sold were in Cochran's catalog #44, which took place on Feb. 12, 1991.

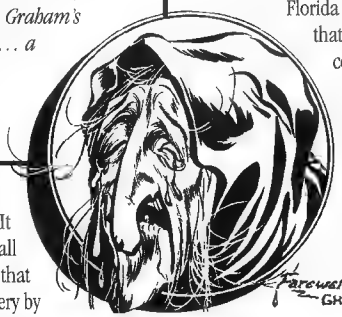
Unfortunately, in late March, 1991, Ingels entered a Florida hospital complaining of stomach pains that were diagnosed shortly thereafter as cancer. He died a few days later on April 4, 1991, at the age of 75. (See page ?? for a selection of "Old Witch" paintings Graham Ingels produced these during his short comeback.) All 14 are, in my opinion, very good. Some certainly better than others, and of course, it all comes down to personal preferences as to which ones are your favorites. They are all now owned and admired by private collectors throughout the world.

Ingels' brush has been silent now for several years. He left behind great images for fans and collectors to study and enjoy for years to come, both in comics, and on the canvases. One thing for sure, the paintings represent a final look into the mind and talent of a great artist... A man who captured our imaginations and whom we will always refer to as the "Master of horror illustration." Graham Ingels' legacy lives on in his work.

Farewell Ghastly... farewell.

GRAHAM INGELS' LIFE

This shy, gentle, mild-mannered, blond, blue-eyed master of horror was born on June 7, 1915 in Cincinnati, Ohio. His father being a commercial artist, it was natural for Graham to be inspired early in life to become an artist himself. The family moved to Georgia, and then on to New York when little Graham was twelve. He attended school in Yonkers and later on Long Island. Due to his father's untimely death, Graham began working at the age of fourteen... doing many odd jobs including window washing. By the age of sixteen Graham's talent secured him a job doing theater displays. His entire schooling in art was derived through association with professional artists... both commercial and fine. He started freelancing at the age of twenty, at the same taking on the added responsibility of a wife! (And a real cutie she is, too! The lovely creature's name is Gertrude.) In 1943, he entered the Navy... and became "a sailor that never went to sea"! He thought his break had come when he was assigned to an L.S.T., but after a week he was taken ashore and shipped to Hunter College, N.Y., to paint a mural for the United Nations. He finally got aboard the U.S.S. Missouri (The Big Mo'), only to be taken off two days later and sent to a quonset hut on the sand dunes of Long Island where he spend the remainder of the war. After his discharge, Graham did pulp illustrations for a year, then joined the staff of a comic publishing company as editor, finally leaving to freelance for several comic houses including EC! Now Graham works exclusively for us, characterizing the Old Witch and her stories in his inimitable style. His work appears in all three EC horror mags as well as Crime SuspenStories. *Today Graham lives in Whitestone, Long Island, with his wife and two children... a 14-year-old daughter, Deanna, and 5-year-old son, Robby. They have a summer home in Smithtown, L.I. (which Graham built himself!) and a spanking new Dodge. Graham's hobbies include fishing, boating, and singing in the shower... a hangover from a once projected singing career. From the tremendous amount of fan mail that Graham receives, it's pretty obvious that he rates tops with you EC readers.*



FROM THE CASE FILE OF JACK KAMEN

By S.C. Ringgenberg

During the EC era (1950-1955), Jack Kamen enjoyed the dubious distinction of being the least popular artist in the EC stable. In retrospect, it's easy to see why. EC's superstars, Wally Wood, Al Williamson, Jack Davis, and Graham Ingels, dazzled fans with their artistic virtuosity, or their flair for certain genres such as horror or science fiction. Former romance artist Jack Kamen didn't seek out fan adulation, or even the kudos of his peers. He was content to be steadily employed, quietly cranking out story after story in his peaceful suburban home.

However, the time has come for a serious reassessment of Kamen's contributions to EC. Granted, Kamen's graceful, carefully rendered art may not have been as flashy as the bravura work from Wally Wood or Graham Ingels' studied stylism, but Kamen was solid. Unlike some of the younger EC artists whose work varied widely in quality, Kamen's work was consistently excellent, story after story. . . after story.

On occasion, Kamen even transcended his own quiet professionalism to produce a certifiable classic such as "Kamen's Kalamity," or his surreal cover for *Psychoanalysis* #1, arguably one of the most visually striking EC covers ever. Kamen excelled at drawing pretty girls, and his clean-cut style was perfectly suited to the twisted fairy tale parodies in *Haunt of Fear* that quickly became his specialty.

Kamen was influential in other ways, as well. It was Kamen, with his knowledge of production and printing, who gave Bill Gaines the idea of doing EC's line of Picto Fiction magazines. They unfortunately flopped, but Gaines used the same format and printing to turn MAD into one of the best-selling humor magazines of all time.

So, let's give a rousing cheer for the underrated, often overlooked Jack Kamen! The truth is, Jack Kamen was a very good artist. At any other company, he would have been a star. His work suffered only by comparison with EC's more outrageous visual auteurs. Perhaps the biggest flaw in Jack Kamen's work was that it was simply too sophisticated and subtle for most EC fans of the period, when compared to the more flamboyant styles of his EC peers.

Remembering Bill Gaines!

An unpublished capsule interview with the progenitor of EC and MAD... conducted March 22, 1985

by S. C. Ringgenberg

STEVE RINGGENBERG: Was your greatest contribution to your father's line of comics the *All-American* title?

BILL GAINES: No, I wouldn't say it was my greatest, (just) my first. When they started *All-American*, the lead feature was called "Red, White and Blue," which was about a soldier, a sailor, and a marine... and he was wondering what to call them, and I said: 'Why don't you call them Red, Whitey and Blooey?' which was a pretty dumb idea, but he accepted it, and that's what they were called. If you check back in your early *All-American Comics*, you'll find it.

RINGGENBERG: How old were you when you came up with that?

GAINES: I don't know. I was born in 1922, and if you find the first issue of *All-American Comics* you can subtract it and figure it out. I remember a lot of anecdotes about Pop but they weren't necessarily connected with comics because I wasn't down there at the business with him until I was older... and then I was just down for summers, usually in the stock room... so I didn't have anything creative to do with comics for a long time after that "Red, Whitey, and Blooey"... except... I think I created the Superman code card and also the Wonder Woman code card for their clubs back in those days. One of them was a rotating disk, I remember. I came up with that idea and made a prototype. It might have been for the Junior Justice Society, it's hard for me to remember.

They were clubs, they were comic clubs. You could join the Superman club for a quarter and you got a lot of garbage, and one of the things would be a card so that you could decode secret messages in *Superman* and *Action Comics*. I'm going back into the 1930s.

RINGGENBERG: What do you recall about your father creating the first comics back in 1933-34?

GAINES: Well, yeah. I wasn't paying much attention at the time, but this is what I've heard. The story goes that he was putting out these premiums and one day he got the idea of putting ten cent stickers on them and putting them on a newsstand and seeing if they'd sell... and they sold *(Continued on page 88)*

JACK KAMEN

(JACK KAMEN INTERVIEW CONDUCTED JULY 21ST, 1997.)

STEVE RINGGENBERG: Mr. Kamen, could you give me a little background about your past? Where you grew up and went to school and so forth?

JACK KAMEN: Background and past. Well, I was born in Brooklyn, in kind of a middle-class neighborhood I guess you would say. I went to art school in New York, both at the Art Student's League and the National Academy and I studied privately with Harvey Dunn. I don't know whether that name rings a bell with you but he was a very famous illustrator, turned out a number of famous illustrators.

RINGGENBERG: Was he a magazine illustrator?

KAMEN: Yes, he was. If you talk to people in the business about those who are known in illustration (both magazines and books) they would know the name Harvey Dunn. I'm probably one of the last remainders of the people that he taught because he died in the 1940s while I was in the service. He died in 1945, I believe.

RINGGENBERG: Were you always drawn to art as a child?

KAMEN: Yes... my father was an artist who died quite young. We are pretty much a family of artists. My cousin, you may or may not have heard of her, is in children's book illustration. She writes and illustrates her own books, Gloria Kamen.

RINGGENBERG: How did you get into comic books?

KAMEN: I was doing pulp illustrations at the time for Better Publications. They, like a lot of the pulp publishers...

TEXT © STEVE RINGGENBERG '1999

Street and Smith, Better Publications, and Fawcett, saw that their pulp magazines didn't sell as well as their comic books did, and so the only assignments they had for black and white artists were comics, so I got into those.

I was doing those until I went into the Army, spent four years in the service and when I came out, I was offered very, very attractive salaries at a lot of the shops around town, both freelance and in the shops… such as Iger and Arnold publications, Fawcett, and things like that. And so I freelanced for a while, but my eye always was on doing illustrations.

RINGGENBERG: Do you recall where you worked on the comics in the pre-war days… before you went into the service?

KAMEN: Most of those I did for Fawcett while at the Chesler shops. Are you familiar with Harry Chesler's syndicate or his shop?

RINGGENBERG: Sure.

KAMEN: I did Bulletman, I believe, and a lot of penciling and inking on a lot of filler-type stories with characters who never repeated themselves. They were used as six-page fillers. I was just a little precocious then and they didn't trust me to stay with a single character, so I was always doing odd jobs of different sorts.

RINGGENBERG: Generally, would you just do the pencil art, or ink, or a combination of both?

KAMEN: I was doing some penciling… with Chesler I started as a background artist. I was very young. This is before I went into the Army, so I knew Harry. Harry was doing contract work for Fawcett publications, and when Fawcett found out who I was, they wanted to hire me. Harry didn't want to let me go, and so I started doing my own features.

They were independent stories of the type which I find very hard to remember, but they were, oh, varieties of things, Superman, or cowboy stories, or since I only did very, very pretty girls… romance…

RINGGENBERG: After you got out of the service, what kind of things were you doing?

KAMEN: When Jerry Iger found out I was out of the service, he hired me. I went into his shop as a penciler. I can remember I did anything that involved females. Matt Baker and myself were the two lady artists if you want to call us that. For Fiction House I did "Ghost Gallery," and for Fox I did "Rulah of the Jungle." She was a jungle queen… an imitation of Sheena. We also did some film magazines and adaptations of newspaper strips for a number of years. I did the covers for the Leslie Charteris detective character, The Saint.

They knew I liked to do them because they were more illustrative than the other comic book varieties.

RINGGENBERG: Did you always feel more comfortable doing stories with a contemporary setting?

KAMEN: Yes. I think the only things I ever did with period settings were western stories. I liked to those because I could do animals… especially horses.

RINGGENBERG: Before you worked for EC did you do any science fiction?

KAMEN: No. The only science fiction I ever did was for EC.

RINGGENBERG: So when did you begin working for Bill Gaines?

KAMEN: I left Iger, and at first I had Bill as a client along with Harvey. This was when the Romance period was very, very big… I got a lot of work. But there again I could do pretty girls.

Then Bill Gaines decided he wanted me full-time. My family was growing and Bill offered me what was very good money for comic book work at the time… and guaranteed me an income, which was very nice instead of the normal freelancing. So I threw in my lot with Bill and we became very, very good friends.

Kamen's women were never more alluring than in "Come Into My Parlor" *Weird Fantasy* #7 (May/Jun 1951)

Jack's Old Witch introduced "Forty Whacks" in *Crime SuspenStories* #13 (Oct/Nov 1952)

FACING PAGE:
Kamen's "Martian Monster" from *Weird Science* #9 (Sep/Oct 1951)

JACK KAMEN

You know, even though I was older than Bill was, he was very fatherly. He said 'Look, I'll keep you busy, at the rate you want.' And he did.

In fact, one of the reasons he kept me so busy was because I was one of the least popular of the Gaines clan. I would always be called upon to fill in for some of the other people who masqueraded as artists and were temperamental. If you ever go through the ECs and find six-page stories it was because somebody was late, so I would do a fast job and build a kind of a library so they could always go to press on time.

RINGGENBERG: In those days, how fast could you pencil and ink a six-page story?

KAMEN: I was pretty good. I think I did about a page and a half, close to two pages a night.

THE MELODY, JONATHAN'S SHRIEK, FADED AWAY... FADED DOWN INTO THE CANYON... DOWN EIGHTEEN FLOORS TO A DEATH-FINALE...
THE CONCERT WAS OVER. JONATHAN LIVED NO MORE. GLORIA WAS FREE ... AND SHE WAS MINE. SHE FELL INTO MY ARMS...
OH, JAMES! HIS SCREAM! IT...IT WAS AWFUL! AWFUL!
IT'S ALL OVER, NOW, GLORIA. C'MON! LET'S GO DOWN...

Kamen's action sequences could literally spill out of the panels... like this example from "The Sacrifice" in *Shock Suspenstories* #10 (Aug/Sep 1953)

RINGGENBERG: What was the first year you started working for Bill? I was thinking it was 1948 or '49 because that's when Bill Gaines was doing the romance comics.

KAMEN: That's when I climbed on board. I started with Bill through Al Feldstein, who was the editor at the time. He became editor of the whole line. My relationship with Al was very friendly.

Al Feldstein lived in the next town on Long Island, where I had my home. Al had a home in Merrick. Bill had a home in Rockville Centre. Naturally I was working at home, and the three of us being very good friends, I rarely went into the city. What I would do was bring the pencils of the story to Al for lettering. He, in turn, would have another script for me. And this all would take place at his house.

I would take that script back and pencil it. By the time I returned the next one, the lettered pages would come back to me and I would ink them. And so it was this round-robin thing, which would save me trips into New York. Al commuted every day on the Long Island Railroad, and I stayed at home. Although I knew all the other artists, I'd meet them only occasionally at the office when I did come in for parties or for special conferences. But I really didn't know them.

Later I began illustrating for advertising the rates doubled and tripled in advertising compared to comics. Having a larger family than most of the other guys, I had to keep busy to keep up my four children, my two cars, and my big house.

RINGGENBERG: When you were doing advertising would you work for one agency or just freelance?

KAMEN: I freelanced.

RINGGENBERG: Do you remember any of your accounts?

KAMEN: By the time I retired, I had nothing but Fortune 500 companies. I had Mack Truck, RCA, United States Steel, Smith Corona, Union Carbide. I was represented by two people in New York... Dick Remus studios, and the other one was Goodwin & Rush.

RINGGENBERG: Do you remember any EC stories that were particular favorites?

KAMEN: (*Laughs*) The famous one, of course is, "Kamen's Kalamity."

RINGGENBERG: In that story the wife and kids you drew were actually your own wife and kids...

KAMEN: Yep... they were.

RINGGENBERG: Did you work from photos or do it out of your head?

KAMEN: With your own children you can do it out of your head. My wife's a pretty lady, and my kids are very handsome kids.

RINGGENBERG: Did your kids get a kick out of being in a comic book?

KAMEN: Well, they were a little young then. They didn't realize until now... when they had to pay high prices to buy the originals. My son's been buying originals. He has an enormous gallery in his building and he has them all framed up.

RINGGENBERG: During the EC era, you went from doing romance comics to doing horror and sci-fi stories. Then when the comics business starting winding down, I know you did some work for the EC Picto-Fiction books.

HO, HO! FOND FELICITATIONS, FANS! YEP, IT'S US... THE DEN-KEEPERS... YOUR EDITORS, BILL AND AL! IN THIS ISSUE OF TALES FROM THE CRYPT, THE CRYPT-KEEPER HAS CHEERFULLY (THAT'S A LAUGH! WE HAD TO THREATEN TO CUT OFF HIS SUPPLY OF CADAVERS!) CONSENTED TO OUR APPEARING IN THE FLABBY FLESH TO PERSONALLY TELL YOU OUR VERY OWN HORROR STORY! SO COME CLOSER TO THE ELECTRIC-HEATER... SIT YOURSELF DOWN ON THAT ROTTED OLD TEXT-WRITER...AND WE'LL HAND OUT A YARN FROM OUR TRASH-BASKET (ALL OF OUR STORIES ARE TRASH!) THAT WE AFFECTIONATELY CALL...
KAMEN'S KALAMITY!
OUR STORY BEGINS BACK IN THE DAYS WHEN E.C. WAS JUST A BUDDING ORGANIZATION BUSILY ENGAGED IN PUBLISHING LOVE MAGAZINES FOR ROMANCE-STARVED WOMANHOOD! IN THOSE DAYS OUR MOTTO WAS "SIGH"! NOW.. IT'S "UGH"! ONE DAY, AS BILL WAS BUSY CHASING SUZY, OUR SECRETARY, AROUND THE OFFICE, ATTEMPTING TO GATHER MATERIAL...
I BEG YOUR PARDON! ARE THESE THE OFFICES OF THE ENTERTAINING COMICS GROUP?
GOOD LORD! JACK KAMEN..
I'M GETTIN' OUT OF HERE!
BY Jack Kamen (WHO ELSE??)
1

KAMEN: Yeah… one the very first one… I did the complete book. And I liked it, the paste-ups in it, but they didn't sell too well. And that was the final push for Bill. He just gave up completely… just left comics, period.

RINGGENBERG: When you did the Picto-Fiction stories, did you experiment with crayons or wash illustrations?

KAMEN: Yeah. For the halftones, I used what I called 'DeMarco boards' with the dot or moray pattern….

RINGGENBERG: Coquille board?

KAMEN: Coquille board. The halftones were done with coquille board and liquidot crayon… and then some of the pages were pasted in… the other stuff was pen and ink and drybrush.

The most famous Kamen story of all-time… "Kamen's Kalamity!" from *Tales from the Crypt* #31 (Aug/Sep 1952)

JACK KAMEN

RINGGENBERG: It sounds like you enjoy the opportunity to use different media...

KAMEN: Oh yes, I always did. In fact, even my illustrations are multi-media. I usually start with colored ink and then dilutions of acrylic paint, and then heavier acrylic paint. Then I'll touch it up with colored pencils.

Kamen's realistic depictions added to the shock value in "Just Desserts" from *Shock SuspenStories* #3 (Jun/Jul 1952)

RINGGENBERG: You said when EC went out of business you left comics?

KAMEN: Oh, I left before. I saw the handwriting on the wall. Bill, who was a fine human being and a good friend, showed me how badly the business was going and he told me he didn't know how much longer he could stay with it. When I saw the figures, I began pushing my advertising clients and then very fortunately, I found two good representatives who took my samples around... and I was accepted immediately.

Right away I began to make, quite frankly, good money... rather than the dollars per page that comics could pay.

RINGGENBERG: You've expressed concerns about how the fan press has portrayed your role in the early *MAD*...

KAMEN: There's been some interviews that presented warped ideas about *MAD* magazine's start and my role in it. I had nothing to do with it. Let me please repeat that point... I had nothing to do with *MAD* magazine, except perhaps through my work on the early Picto-Fiction format magazines. When I left, *MAD* was *still* running as a comic.

My role with the Picto-Fiction started during a "social" meeting... (Gaines) said he wanted to get up a line of books not governed by the Comics Code. I was doing illustration at that time and I was more familiar with the (larger format) reproductions. The other EC guys were just pen and ink on Bristol board mainly.

So I said to Bill 'maybe we could get away with this (larger format). Do it larger, do it magazine size.'

The Comics Code "law" was written so that the comic book was described as being printed on newsprint paper, black and white drawings, with halftone color or line print color added to it, and lettering in balloons. So, I said, 'Look, what we're going to do is make the (magazines) larger, in the *MAD* format size, and shoot them in black and white. We didn't use color... which didn't make it a comic book anymore.

Bill says, 'That's great!' So, I did the very first one, which I believe was called *Shock Illustrated*... I did the whole book. I might have pasted up all the typography too. And although it didn't catch on, it did get away from the Comics Code thing. When they started to get after the *MAD* comic, Bill stopped doing it as a comic book and began to print it in the same format as the Picto-Fiction books.

RINGGENBERG: So, were you the first one to suggest to Bill that he do the black and white magazines?

KAMEN: Yes... I went with him to the Metropolitan Press and that's why I did the very first book. It was my idea. After that, I was unable to stay anymore. Then he printed two more, but some of the other artists ended up doing them, but they didn't sell.

STEVE WAS REAL MAD! HE STARTED SHOUTIN'...
NOBODY TOLD YOU GUYS TO QUIT WORKIN'! THIS IS NO SHOW! GO ON! GET BACK TO YOUR TREES! AND MAKE IT SNAPPY!

Closeup from "Split Second" in *Shock SuspenStories* #4 (Aug/Sep 1952)

RINGGENBERG: The New Trend title *Psychoanalysis* was yours too...

KAMEN: Yes and the Psychiatrist was my creation. He even tried to sell that (comic) strip to the syndicates, calling it *The Psychiatrist* but that didn't go. Al wrote it, and Bill and I took it around, but it didn't work out.

RINGGENBERG: I remember your work on *Psychoanalysis*... I loved your cover to #3 with the eyes in the background... the whole idea of using Psychoanalysis as a concept seemed like such an unusual concept for a comic book.

KAMEN: Well, Bill had unusual concepts. He and Al did. I didn't think up anything. I just sat in as an innocent bystander. They'd bounce this stuff around with me and I would do it. I was pretty much an information source, you might say.

But it was all over by then... and *Psychoanalysis* didn't help the money flow very much. The only thing that really helped was when they changed the format of *MAD* to a magazine.

Some people give me credit for being part of *MAD*. Bill said, 'Look, you're a crazy guy... you could work on *MAD*.'

I said, 'No, no. I'm making too much money now, and I don't know what this is anymore.

But we kept our friendship.

RINGGENBERG: After EC did you ever do comics again?

KAMEN: No. I think the only thing I came back to comics for was when I was rediscovered. Somebody saw the ads in *Variety* magazine for the film *Creepshow*. In fact, it was kind of a coincidence... Stephen King happens to be a collector. One guy said, 'we're going to get one of the old EC guys to do the cover... we could get Jack Kamen!' And King said 'My God, you know Jack Kamen? I collect his work!'

So they brought me back. Of course I was quite delighted to meet Stephen King and George Romero and all the people on the film. After that, EC collectors "found me"...

RINGGENBERG: Which of the other EC artists' work did you particularly like?

KAMEN: Well, one was Bernie Krigstein. He died prematurely. Bernie actually wound up doing record covers and then he died a very young man. Many times after he left EC, we'd both work at places like Cunningham and Walsh and BBD&O and some of the bigger agencies. But he stuck with records because he had a flair for doing more decorative stuff... he was just great for the record market. I'm really surprised collectors don't go after his album covers. He did some beautiful record albums. He painted them.

They're hard to find because he didn't sign them. He did lots of Mercury records... he did some for RCA too.

'THE BEARER WINS!' 'THE BEARER WINS!' IT KEPT POUNDING IN HELEN'S ANGRY JEALOUS BRAIN. SHE REACHED FOR THE BOTTLE OF SLEEPING PILLS. IF JOYCE OVER-SLEPT TOMORROW...
...WHY...WHY I COULD GO IN HER PLACE. AND...AND I'D GET THE BREAK I NEED.
OH, NO TROUBLE AT ALL, JOYCE!
SLEEP TABL
2

Kamen's use of blacks makes this compelling panel from "Beauty Rest" (*The Vault of Horror* #35, Feb/Mar 1954) a standout

Occasionally when Bernie and I got together at the illustrators' society, we'd kid around about being ex-comic book artists.

RINGGENBERG: When you were doing EC Comics art, was a lot of your work in pen, or did you mostly use a brush?

KAMEN: Brush. Mostly brush. Backgrounds usually both pencil and ink.

Jack combined sci-fi with offbeat humor in "Reducing Costs" from *Weird Science* #10 (Nov/Dec 1951)

JACK KAMEN

RINGGENBERG: Would you pencil fairly tight?

KAMEN: For myself, I didn't have to pencil fairly tight. If I was penciling for somebody else, I'd pencil tight and they used to love it… because my tight penciling was actually a rendition of what I would do if the brush was a pen.

RINGGENBERG: You had mentioned earlier that you worked around Matt Baker. What was he like?

KAMEN: Oh, very nice. He wasn't a well man. Very nice guy though. Unfortunately, you'd never really see Matt when he was working in comics. He was a hider. Most of his work, in fact a lot of his work, was inked by a fellow by the name of Davey Hughes. And you know, Al Feldstein inked him too.

Kamen's micro BEM from "The Micro-Race!" in *Weird Science* #13 (Jul/Aug 1950)

Al Feldstein inked a lot of the things I penciled (for Iger).

RINGGENBERG: Oh, and that's where your acquaintance with Feldstein came from?

KAMEN: Yes. Al Feldstein got me into it… back when the romance thing came up and they were having trouble getting some of these gory artists to do pretty girls. He told Bill 'I've got this friend of mine… who (I was inking), and he was the girl artist in Iger's shop.'

And Bill said, 'For crying out loud, go get him.' And that's how I got to EC, only because of the romance.

RINGGENBERG: Were you a little taken aback when they switched over to horror stories?

KAMEN: A little bit. But there again, I didn't mind. In fact, that's how the "Kamen's Kalamity" story came into being. We sat down there and they outlined it, and they said you know, 'We're going to do this story on you.'

So, I said, 'What do you want to do?' And so they told me and I said, 'That's a great idea. Let's do it.' And I did it.

I had to pay a lot of money to Sotheby's to get the original art for that story.

RINGGENBERG: Did you get the entire story?

KAMEN: Yep.

RINGGENBERG: Have you done any other comics-oriented projects after Creepshow?

KAMEN: No… that's the last I ever did. In fact, they wanted me to do the book but then I found this wonderful artist, named Berni Wrightson. I said, 'Give this guy the book. He's the perfect guy to do your stories.'

I know Berni is one of the best in business, I think.

RINGGENBERG: Do you still draw or paint for yourself?

KAMEN: Yeah.

RINGGENBERG: What sort of things are you doing nowadays?

KAMEN: (My son and I, we have) a medical research company. We also have a helicopter company. Very often we need brochures or (for the medical supply company) we need detailed drawings for the engineers to produce (the equipment). And you know, we were, at one time, the largest producer of portable medical equipment… the portable infusion pump, which actually started the whole business in this area.

As for art, I'll do paintings of… ships or portraits… things like that. Nothing that I'd want to sell. After years of doing assignments, you know it's nice to do what you like to do rather than what some marketing person (tells) you to do…

RINGGENBERG: Well, thanks for talking with me…

KAMEN: I enjoyed it. Give my best to your family

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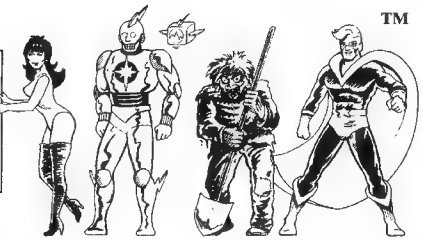

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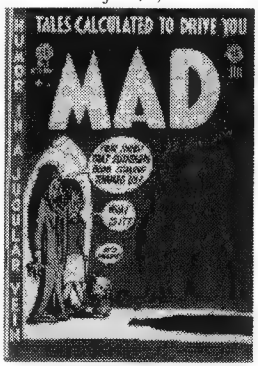
Mad Comics #1
CGC FN-; My grade VG+
Sold for $1,211!



Startling Terror #11
Nice VG+, classic Cole cover!
Sold for $263!

Donald Duck Four Color #9
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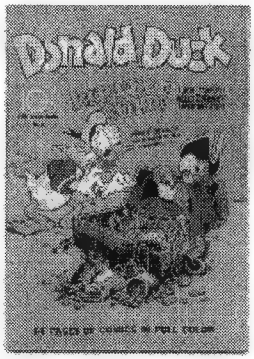

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THE ART OF Jack Davis

BY PAT S. CALHOUN AND LEE DE BROFF

The czar of caricature has done a lot more in the world of commercial art than just EC comics... but it's his comic fans that love him the most!

Davis' Crypt Keeper in "A Work of Art!" from *Haunt of Fear* #28 (Nov/Dec 1954) is a classic

In *MAD* #2 (Dec/Jan 1952-53), Jack signed the story "Hex!" "Melvin Davis"

BELOW RIGHT: "'Hah! Noon!'" from *MAD* #9 (Feb/Mar 1954)

BELOW: Davis' panel from his haunted house satire "Hoohah!" in *MAD* #1

ning "break-out" success that led to its being one of the most popular mags of the fifties, sixties, and seventies. And as cover artist for *TV Guide* Davis became the darling of a huge "non-comics" audience. His career is fantastic-hard-earned and richly-deserved—and *CBM* is glad to honor it.

Speaking of TV, when the time was right to launch a series of shudder tales on the tube, the Crypt Keeper's "winning out" over the Old Witch and the Vault Keeper was most likely because the Davis representation of this horror host was so powerful...

I'd like to cite one particular example of Jack's EC work, as a nomination for all-time great and unsurpassable comic book tale, and that's the adaptation he drew of Ray Bradbury's, "The Black Ferris." This wonderful story is the heart of Ray's "Something Wicked This Way Comes," a distillation of his "kids meet the supernatural at a traveling carnival" concept. And the Davis art captures perfectly the awe, mystery, suspense, and grim ironic justice of that October night. The Crypt Keeper even dons a derby in the intro to add to the mid-

The czar of caricature, maestro of manic art, genius of graphic action: no matter what genre he worked in Jack Davis created comic art that instantly pulled you into a larger-than-life world. While devouring ECs as a teenager there was constant amazement at the many unique approaches to "illustories," but it was the Davis-drawn yarns that promised and delivered the wildest "fasten-your-seat-belt" rollercoaster rides. War, western, horror, sci-fi, or wacky humor—Jack's magic never failed to make them a memorable four-color experience.

When the EC comics ran into the stone wall of censorship Jack's talent helped the early *MAD* magazines achieve the stun-

way atmosphere. This masterwork first appeared in *Haunt of Fear* #18 (April 1953).

The following is a condensed interview with Jack Davis conducted by Lee de Broff, in which Jack demonstrates that he is an excellent human being as well as an outstanding artist. Thanks for the interview, Jack, and thanks for all the great work, style, and attitude.

Gentleman Jack

Thanks to *CBM* friend Frank Jacobs, who was the official Bill Gaines biographer and has been a *MAD* Magazine writer since the 1950s, *CBM* had the rare opportunity to interview legendary EC/*MAD* artist Jack Davis during June, 2000. An alumnus of the University of Georgia, Mr. Davis is 75 years old, "sort of retired" and does occasional promotional artwork for the Georgia

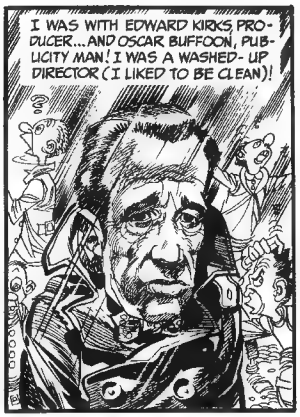
Jack Davis

"The Barefoot Nocountessa!" with "Humphry Yogurt and Ava Nother" in *MAD* #23 (May 1955)

Bulldogs football team. Mr. Jacobs suggests that the interview is best read while keeping in mind Mr. Davis' charming, soft-spoken Georgia drawl!

CBM: Please tell us about your artistic life before EC Comics.

JACK DAVIS: Growing up in Atlanta, I started drawing in grammar school and at art museum summer courses where a teacher would read a story to us and let us illustrate it. So that stirred my interests. And my parents were important, too. One of my mother's hobbies was painting with water colors and my dad used to draw a profile of an Indian so that I could color it in. Those things amazed me and started my interest in art.



CBM: Later, what kind of artwork did you do in the armed services and college?

DAVIS: I would have probably been in the invasion of Japan, but after we dropped the bomb on Hiroshima I went to the Marianas and was stationed on Guam. Every day during the nine months I was there I would draw a panel cartoon and take it over to the Navy News, where they would print it on an offset press.

My character was Boondocker, who was influenced by George Baker's Sad Sack, 'cause he was always kinda in trouble. Then I came back from the war and went to the University of Georgia where I worked for the *Red & Black* newspaper and drew some off-campus cartoons for *The Bull Sheet*, which was not a university-condoned publication!

Davis' art with the Old Witch, the Vault Keeper, and the Crypt Keeper (*TFTC* #46, Feb/Mar 1955) foretold of a fourth horror title that was killed by the Comics Code before it ever saw print

WE GOT TO ACT TONIGHT! BECAUSE IF WE DON'T, HE'LL KILL US! WE'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO KNOW! I BET HE JUST TRIES SOMETHING TONIGHT. SO, I TELL YOU, MEET ME AT MRS. FOLEY'S IN HALF AN HOUR.
AW!
YOU WANNA DIE ?
N-NO!
WELL THEN, MEET ME THERE AND I BET WE SEE THAT ORPHAN BOY SNEAKING OUT WITH THE MONEY, TONIGHT, AND RUNNING BACK DOWN TO THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS WITH IT, WHEN MRS. FOLEY'S ASLEEP. I'LL SEE YOU THERE. SO LONG, PETE!

CBM: What prompted you to leave the South for New York City?

DAVIS: Well, I always wanted to be a syndicated cartoonist because when I was a kid I'd open up the Sunday pages and just lie on the floor… nobody can draw like that anymore… and those artists were terrific!

I loved Milton Caniff, whose strips had solid black inking and lots of action. And Harold Foster and Alex Raymond were the epitome.

So after college I went up to New York because I wanted a strip real bad. I'd worked doing backgrounds for *Mark Trail*, so I mistakenly thought I could go to New York and get syndicated rather easily and come back to Atlanta and draw. Of course, none of that ever happened! Instead, I worked at the *Herald-Tribune* for a while, doing backgrounds for *The Saint*. But then that paper folded and I was out on the street again.

Then I went down to EC and got work there 'cause they had a horror book, and I enjoyed drawing characters like Frankenstein. So I ended up staying in New York for a long, long time!

I don't enjoy drawing blood and guts, but drawing ghost stories and chilling horror has always been fun. Still, I enjoy drawing sports the most. And cowboys, 'cause I always wanted to be a cowboy!

CBM: What are your strongest memories of EC, Harvey Kurtzman, and Bill Gaines?

DAVIS: A lot of things happened at EC. Probably the strongest memory that I have is the time when they told us we couldn't have any more horror books. That was a shocker. But then I was relieved because the early days at *MAD* were great, and it really took off!

Publishing success is a mysterious thing, but it often happens when something is both fresh and funny. *MAD* had a better format than any of the other humor magazines.

Harvey Kurtzman and I lived near each other, and we became very, very close. Now that I look back, it's clear that his illustrations and stories were far ahead of their time. He was a perfectionist and a real genius.

As for Bill Gaines, I remember him fondly. Those *MAD* trips were great, and Bill was the most generous person that I've ever known in publishing. Bill paid us immediately after we handed over our artwork, and he really loved the comics!

He was a good man.

"The Black Ferris!" was EC's legendary adaptation of Ray Bradbury's sci-fi classic "Something Wicked This Way Comes." The story, featuring Davis art, was published in *Haunt of Fear* #18 (Mar/Apr 1953)

Jack Davis, the maestro of action, demonstrates his skill in this panel from "'Hah! Noon!'" in *MAD* #9 (Feb/Mar 1954)

Gaines!

by Stephen Barrington

While I grew up with a heavy appetite for *MAD*, it was the earlier "unknown" work of Gaines for whom I would later have my greatest respect.

In Frank Jacobs' 1972 biographical *The Mad World of William M. Gaines*, he titled one of the chapters, "You'll Never Amount To Anything."

This, of course, was in reference to Gaines. The comment was made regularly by his father, Maxwell. However, history would record a different outcome for the one and only Bill Gaines.

In the late '30s, Maxwell Gaines was at a loss as to what to name a new lead feature for his adventure title, *All-American Comics*. The characters, a sailor, a soldier and a marine were dubbed, Red, White and Blue by the younger Gaines, marking Bill's first contribution to comics. The threesome debuted in *All-American Comics* #1 in 1939.

In 1945, Maxwell Gaines, part owner of the All-American line (publishers of comics with such characters as The Flash, Hawkman, The Mighty Atom, and Wonder Woman), sold his share to Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz, ending a long and contentious battle with the two men. Gaines demanded and received $500,000 for his portion of the business.

Gaines announced his retirement from comics but was back in business weeks later with comic titles, *Tiny Tot, Picture Stories From The Bible, Picture Stories From American History*, and *Animal Fables*. The line carried the banner "Educational Comics."

Despite his "can't-do-anything-right" relationship with his father, Bill was devastated by his father's death in a boating accident in August, 1947. Suddenly, Educational Comics was his for the running... even if he didn't want the job.

While his mother, Jessie, insisted Bill run the business, he had other ideas. He wanted to be a chemistry teacher.

Gaines plugged along and eventually hired Al Feldstein in the late '40s as an artist. This relationship would grow and later lift Gaines' manchild *MAD* magazine to stratospheric success. By 1949, EC was publishing a half dozen crime, western, and love titles.

In Jacobs' book, Sheldon Mayer, former editor for Max Gaines, is quoted: "I got the feeling that Bill went into the business as a joke, to see if he could screw things up, change them for his private amusement, and still manage to make money doing it."

Mayer was also noted for making a list of 'no-no's' for writing and illustrating comics: "Never show anybody stabbed or shot; Show no torture scenes; Never show a hypodermic needle; Don't chop the limbs off of anybody; and... Never show a coffin, especially with anybody in it."

These taboos were all eventually broken but not because he knew about them. "To tell you the truth, I didn't even know what they were. That was stuff he (Mayer) did for my father. Shelly never worked for me and when I went into business, I didn't even know what his list of taboos was. Had I known, I probably would have broken them but I didn't do it intentionally because I didn't know," Gaines said in a 1982 interview.

Before the elder Gaines' death, he had already decided to put out a crime book. "At the time of his death, the first issue was in the works. He had lost a lot of money on namby-pamby books and decided to put out a crime-does-not-pay book where the criminal gets caught in the end. If you ever get an issue of *War Against Crime* #1, I had nothing to do with it," Gaines admitted.

Gaines and Feldstein started tinkering with stories of horror, terror and suspense as backups in the crime issues. Something clicked and the readers responded wanting more.

And it was more they got with the introduction of *The Crypt of Terror* (later *Tales from the Crypt*) and *The Vault of Horror* in 1950. "Entertaining Comics" were in, "Educational Comics" were out. The bold new approach then spawned *The Haunt of Fear, Shock SuspenStories, Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*. Within a year, EC's $100,000-plus debt was wiped out.

While the EC line did very well over the next few years, ideas for stories were getting scarce. Gaines even appealed in *Writer's Digest* for story plots. While this didn't help much, it did give an insight to what Gaines was looking for:

"You should know this about our horror books. We have no ghosts, devils or goblins or the like. We tolerate vampires and werewolves, if they follow tradition and behave the way respectable vampires and werewolves should.

"We love walking corpse stories.

"And we relish the conte cruel *tales of sadism*.

"Virtue doesn't always have to triumph."

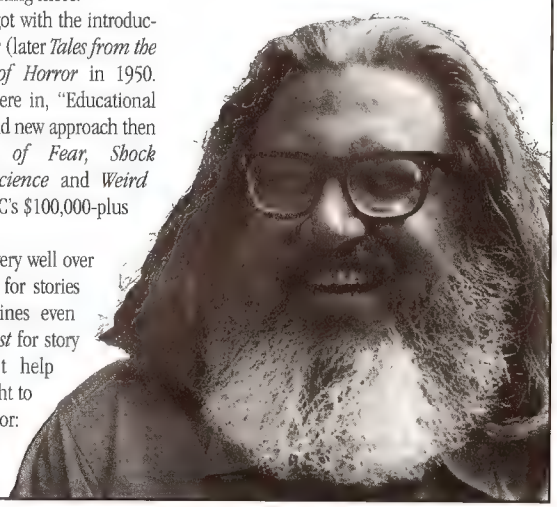
When asked once which he enjoyed more—the subsequent *MAD* years or the horror days—Gaines left no doubt that it was the horror era. His working with the talents of Jack Davis, Wally Wood, Graham Ingels and others invigorated him.

Even with EC's vaunted success, rumblings were starting to grow louder as the '50s progressed. Before the "witch-hunt" attitudes of government officials, efforts to thwart certain types of comics were already afoot.

"Actually, it started even before we were in the field. I think New York State attempted to pass a law against crime books and then later against crime and horror comics every year from about 1948 on. Governor (Thomas) Dewey felt that all these laws were unconstitutional and he vetoed them every year. This was very gratifying to many comic publishers.

"So we went right on publishing what we were publishing, knowing that the public largely didn't like it but knowing other segments did," Gaines said. With public opinion going against EC and distributors refusing to handle his product, Gaines still fought on. Even with his "New Direction" comics, the handwriting was on the wall with the advent of the Comics Code Authority.

(Continued on page 77)



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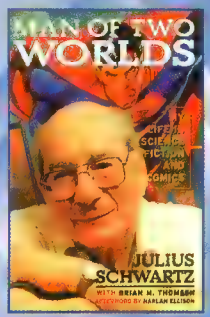

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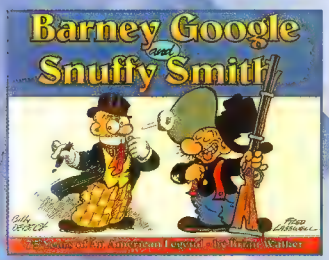

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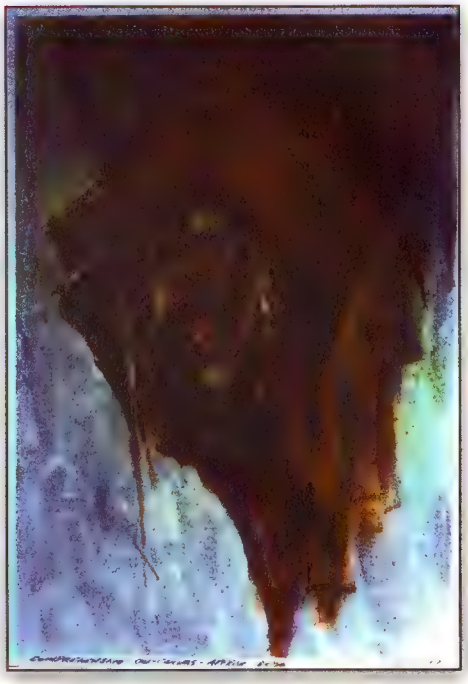
GRAHAM INGELS PAINTINGS

THE OLD WITCH © 2000 WILLIAM M. GAINES AGENT, INC.

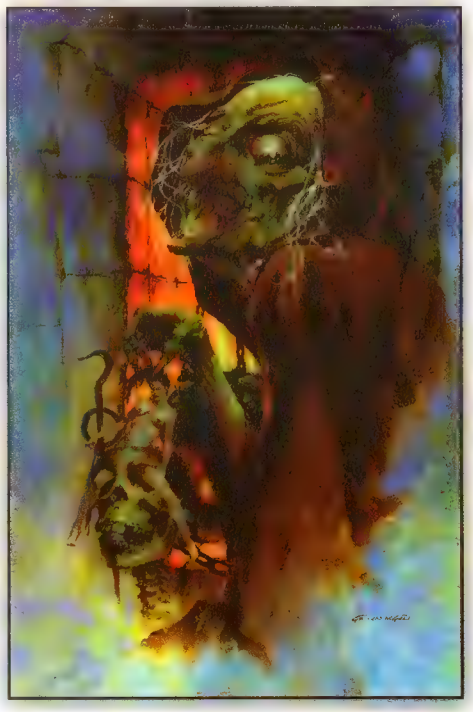
Perhaps the most stunning of his Old Witch images, this Graham Ingels painting has remained locked away in the "vault" and has never been published anywhere... until now!

ABOVE: The final Old Witch painting ever created by Graham Ingels measured 22" x 28" and was sold at auction in February 1991



UPPER RIGHT:
One of the three comprehensive roughs Graham submitted before starting work on the final painting. All were 10" x 14"

THE OLD WITCH © 2000 WILLIAM M. GAINES AGENT, INC.



LOWER LEFT:
Russ Cochran was a little shocked when Graham sent in this painting without first discussing the idea. As this painting demonstrates, Graham was a fan of Frank Frazetta. Graham helped Frank get his start in comic books in the late 1940s

LOWER RIGHT:
When Ingels' third painting arrived everyone could see that he had regained his status as the Master of horror illustration

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With a villain reminiscent of Batman's Scarecrow—and a classic late '40's scantily clad brunette—Graham Ingels horror/bondage scene on the cover of *Wonder Comics* #12 (Jun 1947) has made the issue one of the more sought after Atom Age books. Besides being one of the few non-EC Ingels covers, the post-Golden Age issue also contains the untitled Wonder Man classic in which Dr. Voodoo meets the Themrodons... Citizens of the *Sun! Wonder* #12 presently *Guides* for about $55 in Good and $160 in Fine

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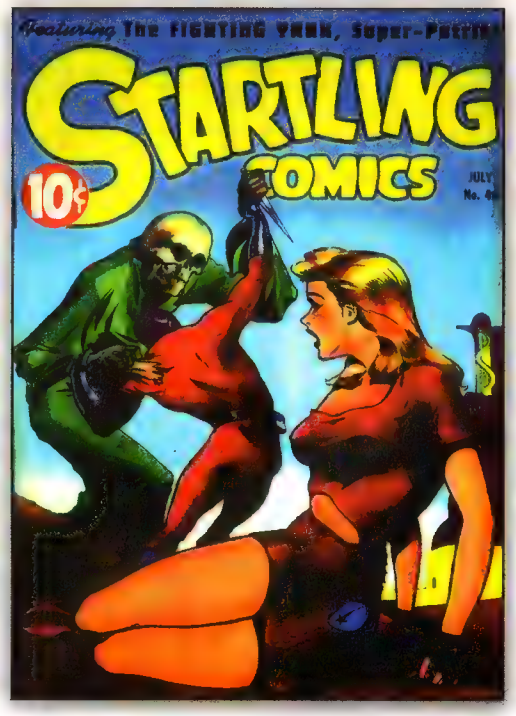
Ingels painted the cover for *Heroic Comics* #41 (Mar 1947) ...the only one he ever did!

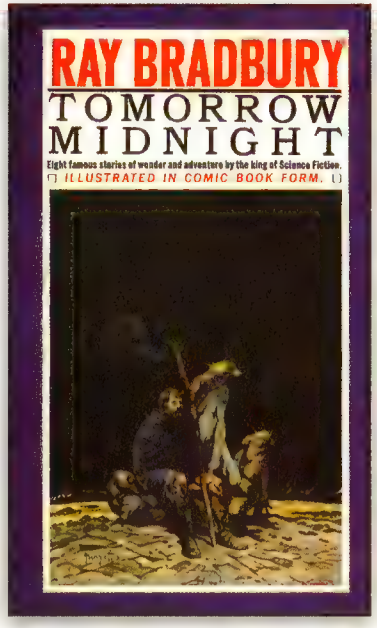
Graham Ingels' one and only pulp cover for *Planet Stories* (Spr 1944) proved to be his first masterpiece of horror

STARTLING COVERS COURTESY THE PAT CALHOUN COLLECTION



Startling Comics #44 (Mar 1947) and #46 (Jul 1947) both feature Atom Age covers by Graham Ingels, with #44 marking the beginning of the sci-fi run of the title

Now obscure EC collectibles, Ballantine Books produced six reprint paperbacks "...adapted and illustrated in the old comic book tradition." Three of them... *Tomorrow Midnight*, *The Autumn People*, and *The October Country* (not pictured) reprinted EC adaptations of Ray Bradbury horror and sci-fi stories. *The Vault Of Horror* and *Tales From The Crypt* reprinted classic EC horror, while *Tales Of The Incredible* reprinted EC science fiction. The first printings of all six books date from December 1964 through October 1965. When initially released, the paperbacks caused some in early fandom to develop the false hope that EC comics would resume publication in some form. All six books are extremely scarce in high grade.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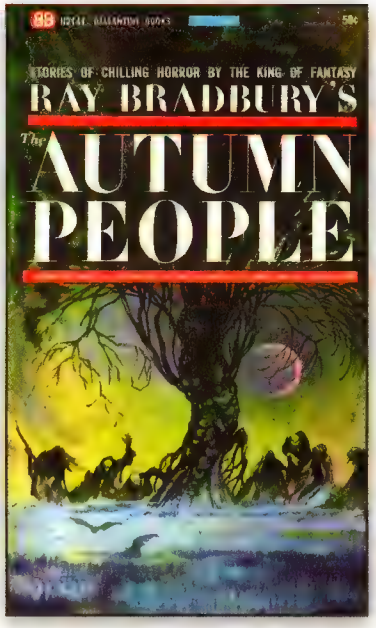

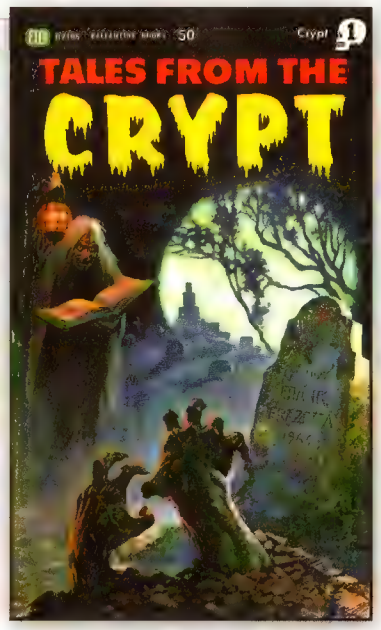

TOMORROW MIDNIGHT, THE AUTUMN PEOPLE & THE OCTOBER COUNTRY © 2000 RAY BRADBURY; THE VAULT OF HORROR, TALES FROM THE CRYPT, & TALES OF THE INCREDIBLE © 2000 WILLIAM M. GAINES AGENT, ARR. PAPERBACKS © BALLANTINE BOOKS

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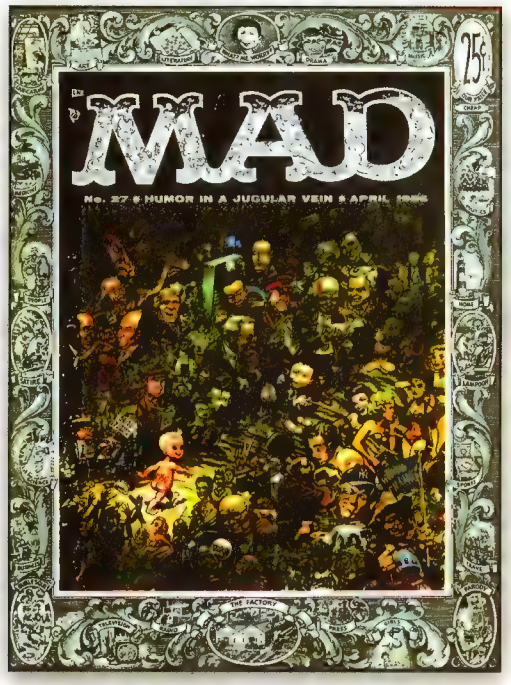
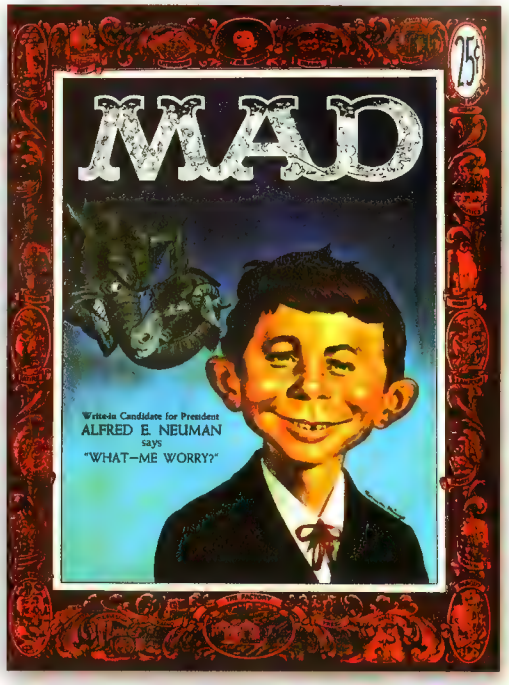
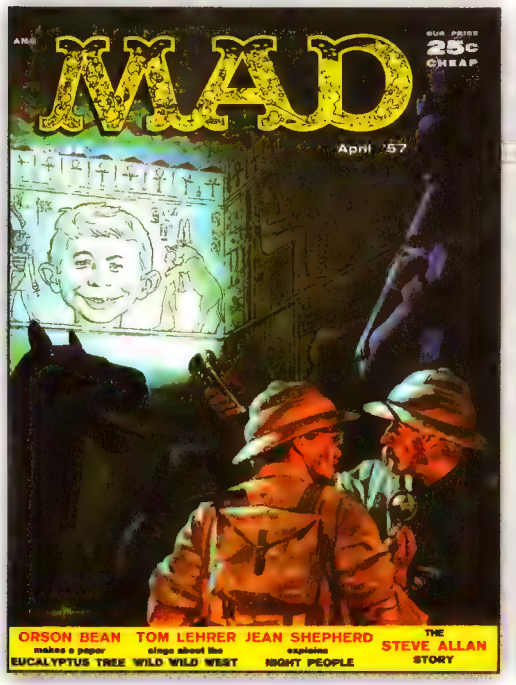
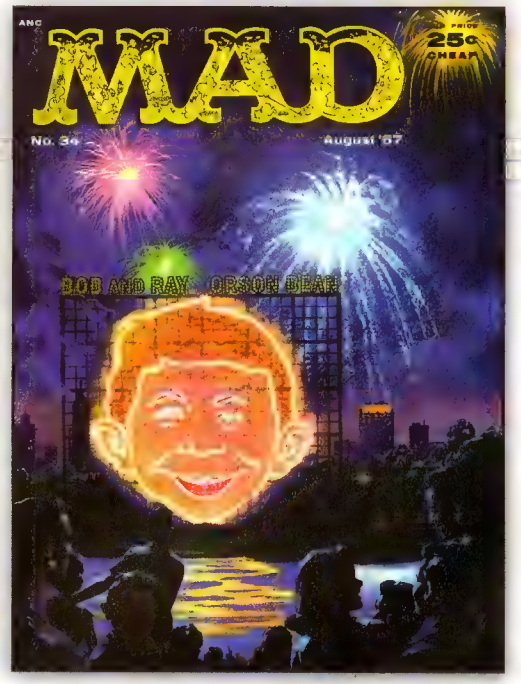




The incredible detail and the number of faces on the cover of *MAD* #27 (Spr 1956) demonstrated to all that Jack Davis was truly the "Czar of Caricatures"

Alfred E. Neuman became a candidate for president on the cover of *MAD* #30 (Nov/Dec 1956)



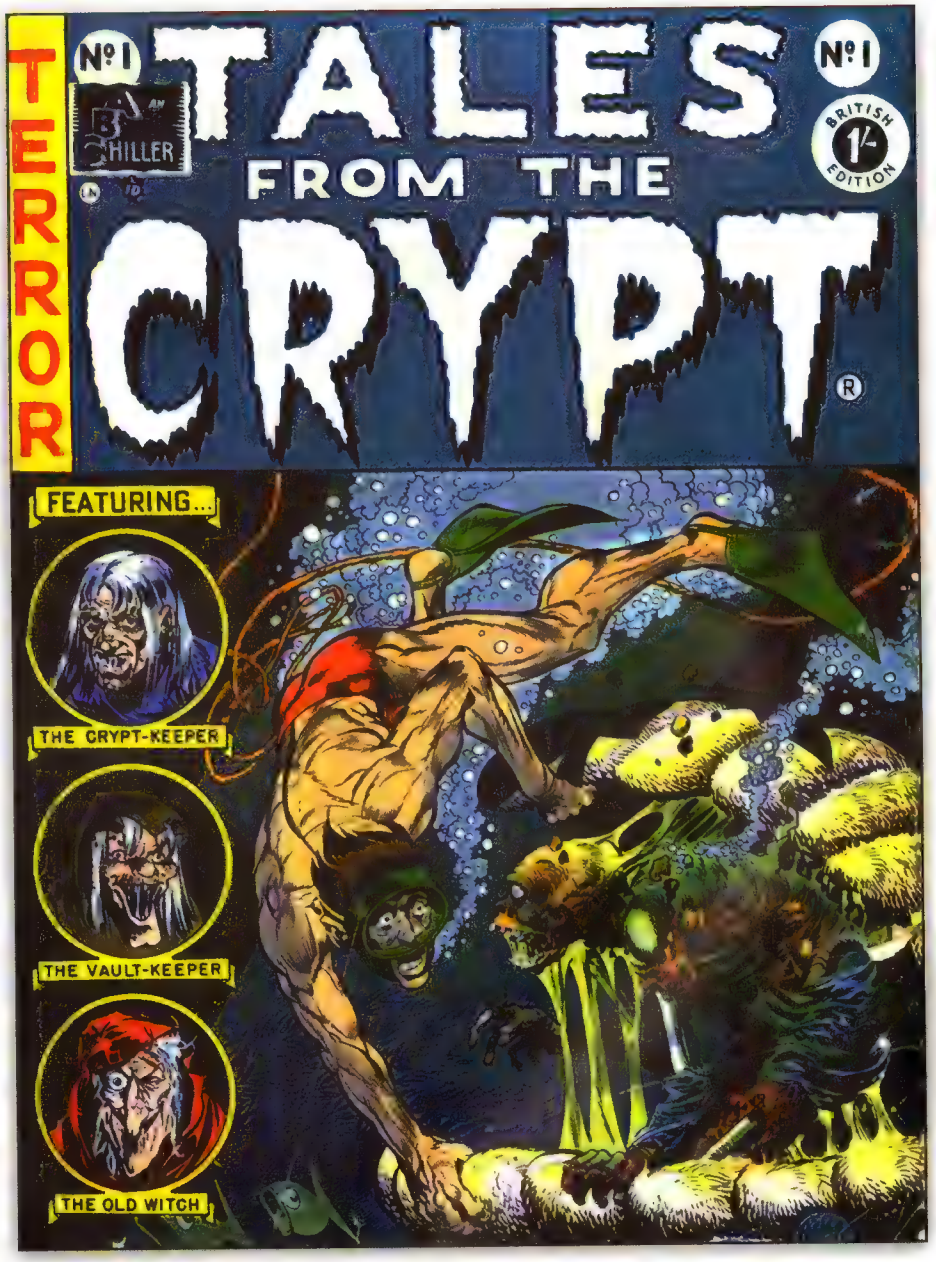


Norman Mingo's rich and colorful "low light" paintings used on the covers of *MAD* #32 (Mar/Apr 1957) and #34 (Jul/Aug 1957) demonstrate why he is considered *MAD*'s consummate cover artist

BRIT CRYPT

I am a big fan of your excellent magazine. I just happened to notice that you are doing an EC special. I am a DC guy myself but I do have an EC curiosity that I'd like to share with you... *Tales of the Crypt* #1, the British version done in black and white. I assume that the contents are the same as the US version, but I don't know for sure. The lead story is entitled "Food for Thought." There is no date information on it at all so my best guess is mid '50s. The text pages are British as they give an address in London. Hope this is of some interest to *CBM* readers. Love your magazine—it's the best on the market.

Best wishes...
Gerald Edwards,
Glasgow, Scotland



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Feldstein's bug-eyed monster cover art for EC's *Weird Science-Fantasy* Annual (1952)

Al Feldstein

CONSUMMATE COMICS CREATOR & EDITOR

A Pat S. Calhoun Interview

Al Feldstein's name ranks high on the list of distinguished comic book editors, having served during the Atomic Age heyday of EC Comics… and when those books were shut down by the political scapegoating of the mid-1950s, he took over the reins of the revamped *MAD Magazine* and held that position for 29 years of outrageous humor and satire. Al also ranks high as a comic book writer, and as an artist: a "hat trick" unduplicated in the industry.

Besides taking *MAD* to a seldom-matched circulation of almost 3 million copies per issue (which some have ranked as his most noteworthy achievement) and developing many fabulous writers and artists along the way, Al's art is his true love, and it is always ready to make an immediate impression with distinctive style and emphatic linework. His science-fiction covers for EC's famous sci-fi sisters, *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy,* are eye-catching masterpieces of the genre that never fail to deliver an always-needed dose of that precious "sense of wonder."

And, fortunately for fans and historians, Al's memories of his career, from his start as an "eraser" at the Eisner and Iger shop, through the Fox years, the flowering of EC, and the zany satire of the much-imitated *MAD*, are clear and copious. So—prepare, lucky reader, to hear the story of this legend of graphic literature in his own well-chosen words…

PAT CALHOUN: When and where were you born?

AL FELDSTEIN: In Brooklyn, New York… on October 24, 1925.

CALHOUN: Did you draw as a child?

FELDSTEIN: Starting around five I would always claim the shirt-boards that came from the cleaners and fill them with stick-figure stories that I'd share with my parents and relatives. I learned that you can receive a lot of approval by being creative. This was—of course—before there were mass-market comic books…

CALHOUN: So your parents were supportive of your artistic inclinations…

FELDSTEIN: Very much so, especially my mother. When I started to show some talent she would take me to art classes, which we couldn't afford to enroll in—we'd sit in the back and absorb what we could. She gave me my first oil paint set when I was around eleven. My older brother drew as well but didn't pursue it…

CALHOUN: Were you a fan of newspaper comic strips?

FELDSTEIN: Not really. This was during the depth of the Depression. My father was a dental technician, making plates and bridges for dentists, and when things got tough they started doing their own work. We lost our house in 1938. All that certainly inspired me to a goal of a steady income…

CALHOUN: And in high school?

FELDSTEIN: Well, my high school art teacher helped me get into and win a poster contest for the World's Fair in 1938, and she suggested that I go to the special school the new mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, had set up to nurture talent, the School of Music and Art. Back then it was different, unlike today's educational system where everyone is forced to be normal. It was at that school that I decided I wanted to be an art teacher. After doing odd jobs like pin boy at a bowling alley, I heard about a student, Norman Maurer, who was making money drawing comics. I borrowed a few comic books—I'd never seen them before—and made up a portfolio.

A WEIRD-SCIENCE SUSPENSTORY!
THIS WAS THE HOUSE! FOR TWO YEARS I HAD DREAMED ABOUT THIS MOMENT...FOR TWO LONG YEARS...AND NOW, AS I WAITED FOR DIANE TO ANSWER MY RING, I WONDERED WHETHER WHAT I WAS DOING WAS RIGHT... WHETHER WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO DO TO DIANE WOULD BE FAIR TO HER! BUT, BEFORE I COULD CHANGE MY MIND, SHE WAS THERE...AT THE DOOR...
YES?
HELLO... DIANE!

Feldstein's surreal splash page from "Am I Man or Machine?" in *Weird Fantasy* #13 (May/Jun 1950)

CALHOUN: Luckily, you were in New York...

FELDSTEIN: Yes—I went looking for work. My stuff wasn't that good, but I landed a position at the Eisner and Iger comics production shop as an eraser—cleaning up pages after they were inked. Then I moved up to inking backgrounds, then penciling and inking backgrounds, and by then I was good enough to pencil an entire page—which I did. But I had to give the job up when I started Brooklyn College, because I was also going on a scholarship to the Art Student's League at night.

CALHOUN: Then World War II no doubt curved your career path...

FELDSTEIN: Right. I wasn't quite 18, but I heard you could join the Air Corps at 17. I did and eventually got called up in March of 1944. By then the air war in Europe was pretty well won. I got sent to a base in Arkansas, but they needed more crewmen than pilots. On the first day as we were getting assigned to planes I realized I didn't want this so I approached the officer in charge and told him I was an artist. So they switched me to Special Services, and I spent the War drawing.

CALHOUN: What about after the War?

FELDSTEIN: While I was waiting to get into Columbia—which I could afford now—I started working at Jerry Iger's and soon I was "drawing" a teacher's salary; so when Columbia announced they were full I let it slide. I was making money so I left Jerry's and started freelancing, but that was a pain because after every job you turned in you'd have to run around with your portfolio to drum up another.

CALHOUN: Was that when you hooked up with Victor Fox?

FELDSTEIN: Well actually I was doing teenage stuff for Bob Farrell; and he suggested that Fox wanted to do that kind of material and introduced me. The editor at Fox said that what they really wanted was someone who could do a complete teenage package; so I lied and said that my wife was a writer, and soon I was writing and drawing and doing covers.

CALHOUN: This sounds like Junior and Sunny—the books with the outrageous and sought-after cheesecake covers...

FELDSTEIN: I drew rather nubile girls who favored tight sweaters; I was influenced by Lana Turner the movie star...

CALHOUN: Did you deal with Victor Fox personally?

FELDSTEIN: No. I met him; he grunted at me. He was a little horn-rim glasses guy, a tough egg who was rumored to have ties to organized crime. I was warned about them getting behind on payments, so I'd never turn in a job until I'd gotten money for the last one.

CALHOUN: And this is about when you went to work for Bill Gaines and begin your long and fruitful career at EC...

FELDSTEIN: In fact it was my sweater girls that caught

Bill's eye. He loved them. I'd heard that Fox was in financial trouble, so when I got wind—through the lettering service that did the Fox books and EC's—that the son of the guy who invented the comic book had just inherited the business, was looking for artists, and wanted to talk to me: I was quite interested.

CALHOUN: Were they already doing *Saddle Justice* and *Crime Patrol* when you got there?

FELDSTEIN: Not yet. They were impressed by Archie's success (which I'd never read, by the way) and wanted me to do a teenage book. Bill even offered me a contract with a percentage of the profits on a book to be called *Going Steady with Peggy*.

CALHOUN: But the book never happened...

FELDSTEIN: He called me into the office one day and told me, 'Look, the teenage market is collapsing.' I later found out that his mother and lawyer were upset with the "piece of the pie" contract he'd made with me, and that's why they canceled the project. So he said, 'We've got a contract, but if the book fails we all lose; what do you want to do?' And I said, 'Tear up the contract, and I'll go to work for you.' By then they were doing this imitative stuff, the *Saddle Justice* and *Crime Patrol*, and I started writing and drawing for those titles. But romance was trendy so they changed the western to *Saddle Romances* and the superheroine title that was faltering, *Moon Girl*, became *a Moon, a Girl, Romance*.

CALHOUN: Books that were equally derivative and imitative...

FELDSTEIN: Oh yeah, they were garbage. But Bill and I were becoming friends. We both lived in Brooklyn, and he'd drive me home and we'd talk. And we decided that maybe we should innovate rather than imitate. We found that we both had a fondness for the old scary radio shows, especially Arch Obler's *Lights Out*, and I thought scary stuff would work well in comics.

A TRUE CRIME STORY TAKEN FROM FBI FILES
"IN CONSIDERATION OF INNOCENT PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THIS TRUE CRIME STORY---ALL NAMES HAVE BEEN FICTIONIZED!
R. FELDSTEIN

Rarely seen early Feldstein splash page for "The Craig Gang" in *War Against Crime* #7 (Jun/Jul 1949)

CALHOUN: You drew a story in an early issue of ACG's *Adventures Into the Unknown*, which is often billed as the first horror title...

FELDSTEIN: That was more supernatural "old dark house" type stuff, but it seemed to be succeeding. Bill was leery, so I suggested we try a few shockers in *Crime Patrol* and see what happens. Bill was always a little overweight, and he had started taking dexedrine to fight it. But he took them before dinner, and they gave him insomnia. So he started reading voraciously at night, and after we'd done a few terror tales, he started feeding me plots gleaned from his intake of Saki and Lovecraft and so forth.

I didn't want to steal the stories he'd read, so we'd use their plots as springboards and come up with variations and alternatives and go from there. I would then write the stories, actually working on the illustration boards, trying not to write so much that I'd cut into the art space. It did make for gridlike panels, but we got real readable material that way.

Al's aliens assembled in "Child of Tomorrow!" from *Weird Fantasy* #17 (Jan/Feb 1951)

CALHOUN: But until later, with Ray Bradbury, you were never tempted to do actual adaptations of classic stories?

FELDSTEIN: No, not at all.

CALHOUN: Again, later, you did do a few of Otto Binder's Adam Link tales...

FELDSTEIN: Yes; Binder came to us wanting to write, and Bill said we don't need writers. But this might have been after we'd adapted some Bradbury, and Otto might have suggested we adapt Adam Link...

Al Feldstein

CALHOUN: I guess the legend of how the Bradbury adaptations started is true...

FELDSTEIN: Oh yeah; Bill came in with some plots one morning, and we mixed a couple around and wrote a story. Several months later we got a call from Bradbury asking, 'Shouldn't I get paid for my stories you used?,' and Bill answered, 'We've been trying to get a hold of you...' They kept talking, and an arrangement was made to do some adaptations... Ray was wonderful, and working with his stuff improved my writing—although the artists complained that I was getting wordier...

THE TIME: A COLD NOVEMBER NIGHT. THE PLACE: THE OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHER OF "WEIRD SCIENCE" COMIC BOOK! THE ROOMS ARE DARK, EXCEPT FOR A SMALL LIGHT BEHIND A DOOR MARKED "EDITORIAL"! INSIDE, TWO MEN, COLLARS UNBUTTONED...SLEEVES ROLLED UP, ARE FILLING A LONE ASH-TRAY WITH CIGARETTE BUTTS...A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER STANDS IN A TYPEWRITER...
TOMORROW'S THE DEADLINE...AL! WE'VE GOT TO GET A TERRIFIC LEAD STORY OR OLD PHINEAS T. FABLES WILL HAVE OUR HEADS!
I'M STYMIED, BILL! I CAN'T THINK OF A THING!
WEIRD SCIENCE
FELDSTEIN
1

In *Weird Fantasy* #11 (Jul/Aug 1950), Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein discuss "a terrific lead story" which turns out to be the "Cosmic Ray Bomb Explosion!"

CALHOUN: Let's talk artists... what do you recall about about Johnny Craig?

FELDSTEIN: Johnny was already at EC when I arrived. He was drawing, and it wasn't until I had him doing the *Vault of Horror* that we started urging him to write his own material—mostly because I was already so busy with *Crypt of Terror* and *Haunt of Fear* and the crime and SF books. Johnny went on to edit the *Vault* mag, as well as writing and drawing the lead story.

CALHOUN: Wally Wood showed up teamed with Harry Harrison.

FELDSTEIN: We liked their art, and we hired them. I thought Wally was the better half and encouraged him to go solo. We wanted the artists to develop their own styles. I was so thrilled when Jack Davis—a kid from Atlanta—arrived, because his work was so distinctive. Similarly, after Wood blossomed he got an assistant, and I found out and urged Joe Orlando to do work of his own... And I got Bill Elder to work without teaming with John Severin, and his zany material in *MAD* was the result.

CALHOUN: When does Harvey Kurtzman arrive?

FELDSTEIN: We were starting to roll with the SF, crime, and horror, and this guy came in with a hilarious strip called "Hey Look." Harvey didn't want to draw horror, but he produced some good sci-fi material. He also worked on some non-newsstand books we had contracted; I remember one about venereal disease. Then we decided to add some new titles—the Korean War was under way—and Harvey wanted to do war books and started *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*. They caught on, and Bill was quite happy because we had a successful line of comics.

CALHOUN: What can you tell us about Bernie Krigstein?

FELDSTEIN: He came in while we were still expanding, with artwork that was innovative and atypical—I liked it. Bernie was great, but he got a little frustrated because my storyboards didn't allow for creative layout. So one day he asked me if he could cut up a storyboard and redesign it; so I said OK. Then he called me later to tell me the six-pager was now eight pages. I said I didn't have room and would have to reschedule it, but all the hassle was worthwhile because the end result was "Master Race" in *Impact* #1 which became one of our most famous stories. And it was a virtuoso layout! We tried to keep EC open, creative, even competitive, and it helped inspire the artists.

CALHOUN: And Al Williamson brought in Frank Frazetta and Angelo Torres...

FELDSTEIN: Yes, once again, they started as a group but all went on to do worthwhile work individually as well.

CALHOUN: I'm fond of the story "Judgment Day"...

FELDSTEIN: That was mine... the one where the Earthman flies to a planet of orange and blue robots to see if they're ready to join the Galactic Empire but finds them wanting due to inequality among the different-colored robots. And in the last panel he's shown to be a black man. We decided to reprint that story after the Comics Code was established, and they wouldn't clear it. Bill threatened to hold a press conference

RUFUS IDLY THUMBED THROUGH THE COMIC BOOKS GIVEN HIM BY THE BELLHOP! SUDDENLY HE CAME ACROSS...
H-M-M-M! THIS WEIRD FANTASY COMIC BOOK LOOKS FAIRLY GOOD! IT CERTAINLY IS SUPERIOR TO THE ORDINARY RUN-OF-THE-MILL TYPE! IT SHOWS IMAGINATION AND CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE!
I...I...
REDUCE ENGRAMS WITH OLD MOTHER HUBBARD'S CURE-ALL!
WEIRD FANTASY

to tell them what they were censoring. So they allowed it but then told Bill over the phone that he'd have to take the sweat off the man's brow in the last panel. Bill said '$@%& you'; hung up the phone, and ran it as is.

Of course the Code was designed to put EC out of business…

CALHOUN: This seems like a good time to ask about the Senate investigation that prompted the Code. Did you testify?

FELDSTEIN: I was subpoenaed, but I appeared in a closed session of the subcommittee. Bill made a mistake by testifying publicly, without anyone to help him. He volunteered to do so, upon the advice of the business manager who wrote his speech. He gave the speech, and it was good, but after that they crucified him.

Kefauver had run the investigation into organized crime a couple of years previously and had grilled Mafia bosses on TV. It was one of the first big televised events and sold a lot of sets. Now they were looking into juvenile delinquency, and comics were an easy target.

Kefauver, of course, wanted to be President…

CALHOUN: On a lighter note, you'd started *MAD* with Kurtzman editing, and it was selling, so you also came out with *Panic*… which you edited.

FELDSTEIN: Yes. *MAD* was doing well that every other comics company tried a couple of imitations… so we decided to do one ourselves. We had collapsed *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* into *Weird Science-Fantasy*, because the SF wasn't moving, and that gave us a gap to fill.

CALHOUN: After the havoc of the investigation you launched the "New Direction" titles. I thought Valor was great…

FELDSTEIN: Bill magnanimously announced that if the American public didn't want crime and horror, he would accede and do something else. But the truth was that the distributors wouldn't handle our stuff, and when our titles lost enough money it was over. *Aces High* was nice… George Evans could really draw airplanes… And we had *Piracy*.

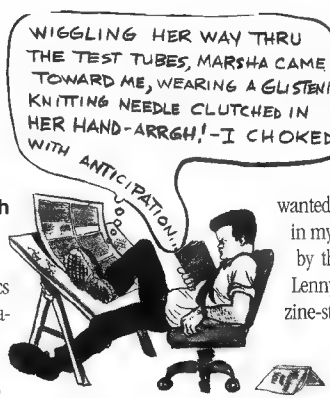
CALHOUN: What about the Picto-Fiction mags?

FELDSTEIN: Harvey convinced Bill to change MAD to a 25¢ magazine that wouldn't have to follow the Code. That worked out, but I think *Shock* and *Terror Illustrated* were tainted by the trouble we'd had. And our distributor was going bankrupt.

CALHOUN: What led to Kurtzman's disassociation with *MAD* and your taking the editorial reins?

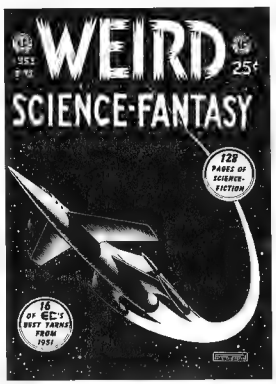
FELDSTEIN: Bill was having huge financial difficulties. We'd stopped everything but *MAD*. In fact Bill had to fire me and most of the artists: Johnny Craig, Graham Ingels, George Evans… Harvey had been approached by Hugh Hefner, who liked *MAD*'s anti-establishment social criticism… and wanted to do a mag like that. Hefner offered Harvey a chance to head up a high-class big-budget magazine, and Harvey (with that in his pocket) went to Bill and demanded 51% of *MAD*. Bill was lying down bleeding financially, but he was still, above all, a good businessman… a consummate capitalist, and he said, 'Go fly a kite; you're fired.'

I was coming home from an interview with a publisher who wanted to start a comics line, and I got off the train, and there was Bill, standing on the platform. I asked, 'What are you doing here?' and he said, 'I fired Harvey, and I wanted to say hello, see how you're doing and find out if you wanted to go back to work for me.' Well, I had right there in my portfolio an idea for a humor book (pre-*Trump*, by the way) that would showcase popular stars like Lenny Bruce, Ernie Kovacs, Bob and Ray—a magazine-style comedy club. So I did it with *MAD*.


WIGGLING HER WAY THRU THE TEST TUBES, MARSHA CAME TOWARD ME, WEARING A GLISTENING KNITTING NEEDLE CLUTCHED IN HER HAND-ARRGH!-I CHOKED WITH ANTICIPATION...

CALHOUN: And you got some work from one of my favorite artists, Basil Wolverton…

FELDSTEIN: Sure, Harvey had run a Basil cover on an early *MAD*, and I'd used one on *Panic*, both featuring the "ugly women" that Wolverton had made famous (and vice-versa) after winning the Al Capp L'il Abner "Lena the Hyena" contest. His work was wonderfully off-the-wall.



The EC sci-fi title *Weird Fantasy* is pictured… and promoted in the story "7 Year Old Genius!" *Weird Fantasy* #7 (May/Jun 1951)

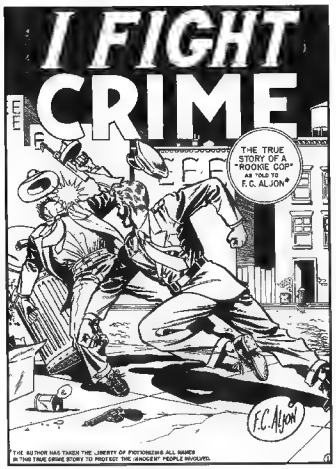
The elegant beauty and simplicity of Al Feldstein's cover for the 2nd *Weird-Science Fantasy* Annual (1953) perfectly captures the look and "feel" of pre-Code 1950's science fiction comic books

CALHOUN: *MAD* had no advertising, but you always ran satiric alcohol and tobacco "ads." Did you ever get in trouble for those?

FELDSTEIN: No. But I do like to remind people that we took on the tobacco industry decades before anyone else tried. We had integrity, and not taking ads was a big part of that. That way no one could pressure us about anything we lampooned.

Later on, in the 1980s, I argued with Bill that such censorship was no longer a problem, and that we could make good money running ads for companies and designing them ourselves. But he wouldn't do it.

That way I could have justified interior color and better paper… which I wanted. I wanted a TV show and a movie; I had a lot of ideas to improve our package.



"I Fight Crime" from *Crime Patrol* #13 (Aug/Sep 1949) is an example of a Feldstein-Craig collaboration… and is signed "F.C. Aljon," an amalgam of their names and initials

CALHOUN: Were you writing and drawing less after becoming editor of *MAD*?

FELDSTEIN: I switched more to developing artists like Mort Drucker and Don Martin.

CALHOUN: And you got the great "Spy vs. Spy" guy after he fled Castro's takeover in Cuba….

FELDSTEIN: Antonio Prohias came in, and he couldn't speak a word of English, but "Spy vs. Spy" spoke for itself. I loved it.

CALHOUN: When and why did you retire?

FELDSTEIN: I retired in 1984. I'd been having the arguments with Bill that we talked about; I thought *MAD* was becoming a buggy-whip in the automobile age. I'd been editor for 29 years. When I took over from Harvey circulation was 375,000 on a quarterly basis, and I took it up to over 2,800,000 per issue eight times a year with eleven foreign editions, 250 paperback titles, and four annuals.

CALHOUN: That's amazing good… especially coming in at what is really the tail-end of the magazine era…

FELDSTEIN: Circulation was down to 1,750,000 when I retired in 1984. I would have stayed if Bill had been more receptive to my ideas. I wanted to do a quarterly VHS magazine, where you'd buy a video tape at the newsstand. And I wanted a traveling theatrical show that would tour colleges—with a talented writer on board who could do riffs on the headlines—just like Jay Leno does in his monologues now.

CALHOUN: So how'd you end up on a ranch in Montana…

FELDSTEIN: In 1981, when I saw the handwriting on the wall, I told Bill I only wanted a three-year contract and worked on getting a nut together that would give me an income so my wife and I could have some fun. I'd made some good investments: I had a apartment whose value had skyrocketed, and I had a house on Kenwood Lake, and a stock portfolio.

But when 1984 rolled around she had developed terminal cancer. I decided to quit anyway. Bill assumed it was so I could be with my wife, but it was really our creative differences about where *MAD* should go. So I quit, and soon I had started painting again.

CALHOUN: What kind of subject matter?

FELDSTEIN: You should go to my web site at www.mcn.net/~afeldstein. I moved to Jackson, Wyoming and began doing landscapes and wildlife.

CALHOUN: I heard something about painting cowboys…

Feldstein: Well, I bought this ranch and became enthralled by this disappearing scene of cowboys and branding and ranch life… it's going fast. Industry is taking over; so I wanted to capture what was left. I discovered (to my chagrin) that there's no market for it. Seems the ranchers and locals who love the paintings can't afford them.

CALHOUN: Are you doing anything with the comics world these days?

FELDSTEIN: You bet! I painted the cover for the 2000 *Overstreet Price Guide*, and I'm going to be selling limited edition signed and numbered prints of it at the show. I also do commissioned paintings of EC cover recreations.

Oh, I'm pleased to say that I'm going to be at the San Diego Con for the 50th EC anniversary reunion and receiving one of the AACC Hall-Of-Fame awards at their annual dinner meeting.

CALHOUN: I'll look you up at the dinner Saturday night…

FELDSTEIN: Jack Davis is going to be there, and he rarely does cons. We'll have fun.

CALHOUN: I had fun doing this interview…

FELDSTEIN: Thank you, Pat. Where's this going to appear?

CALHOUN: In *Comic Book Marketplace*.

FELDSTEIN: It's a nice magazine.

CALHOUN: This will help make the *CBM* EC tribute issue a winner. Speaking for myself and our readers, we thank and salute you.

FELDSTEIN: Take care.

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August 21, 2000, will mark the 31st anniversary of the very first interview I ever did with an artist. It's hard to believe that so many years have gone by and over the past three decades, I have interviewed many other comic artists who worked in this great industry during the Golden Age and Silver Age of comics. This first interview was with the multi-talented Johnny Craig, one of the finest draftsman who ever put pencil and brush to paper. John's accomplishments while working for the EC Entertaining Comics Group from 1947 until 1956 are well-known by *CBM* readers and continue to receive new exposure through the ongoing Russ Cochran/Gemstone reprint editions.

I remember well that warm summer afternoon when I landed at the airport in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. John had offered to meet me at the terminal and pick me up, and I was a little worried that I might not recognize him due to the fact that I only had an older photo of him to go by. This was the one published in several different issues of EC comics, where John was featured as the "Artist Of The Issue." Here it was, seventeen years after that picture was taken. I had been in touch with John a week earlier to make final arrangements, and told him that he would be able to recognize me wearing my Navy white uniform. I was stopping off to meet and interview John while traveling to my new duty station in New London, Connecticut.

As luck would have it, I was the only sailor on the plane that day. I remember there was a crowd of people there also. As I came down the ramp, I spotted John right away. He was just about the tallest person in the crowd, and outside of the glasses he was wearing, he looked pretty much the same as in the photo. In another few minutes, we had greeted one another, loaded up my baggage in his car, and we were headed out of Harrisburg across the Susquehanna River. John calls Pennsylvania home since leaving New York ten years earlier.

Finally, we arrived at the Craig household where I was overwhelmed by the friendly greeting his family gave me. John, his wife, Toni, and their two sons—John and Steve—certainly made me feel at home. Toni was a fantastic cook and I had arrived just in time to sit down to a fabulous Italian supper which she had prepared. During our meal, we all had a long conversation about the good old "EC" days of 1950s. After supper, John and his two sons and I retired to the living room for another, more deep and informative discussion of his career working in the comics field.

Not having been connected with comics fandom, or for that matter not really knowing that a fandom existed, John and his family were all surprised when I told them the prices that EC comics were selling for then. Being the modest fellow he is, John couldn't believe it when I told him he had so many fans around these days who collected and appreciated his work in the comics very much.

Around 7:00 PM that evening, John and I went down to his art studio which was located in his basement. Quite a few oil paintings covered the walls—all mostly bust portraits. John said he had done them while attending night school with Joe Orlando in New York City back in the early 1950s. While I kept myself busy looking over originals and EC comics, John was trying to finish up the inking on a Sub-Mariner story for Marvel Comics. In order to conduct the interview, I had rented a dictaphone machine in Wichita which was small enough to carry with me on the plane. This was in the days when tape recorders were huge heavy pieces of equipment.

During the course of the evening, we finally got around to conducting the interview that you are about to read. At 11:00 PM, I decided to call it a day while John, having to meet a deadline on the Sub-Mariner story, stayed up working on it the rest of the night. The next morning came very quickly and before I knew it, it was time to leave. It was the end of a very memorable occasion and one I will always treasure. I have stayed in touch with John off and on during the past 30 years, mostly by letter, but occasionally by phone. I don't believe John has ever made it to a comic convention yet, and that's probably because he's a very shy and humble person. And that's okay. He's always been very supportive in answering the questions that I have thrown at him over the years about

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THE LEAST MR. LASCH COULD DO IS GIVE US SAFE MACHINES TO WORK WITH!

I COULD DO WITHOUT SAFE MACHINES... BUT I'M SURE WE DESERVE MUCH BETTER LIGHTING! I'M GOING BLIND!
SLOWLY BUT SURELY WE ALL ARE! BUT THERE'S NO USE COMPLAINING! NOTHING CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT!

Two panels from "Stitch in Time" in *Vault of Horror* #23 (Feb/Mar 1952)

his days working at EC, or about art in general.

I owe him a lot! He's a very gifted and talented human being, and just possibly the nicest guy I ever met. Thanks again, Johnny, 31 years after the fact, for allowing this interview.

This interview originally appeared in Jerry Weist's EC fanzine Squa Tront *#4 (1970). What follows is an edited version of that interview.*

ROGER HILL: First, what was your first professional work?

JOHNNY CRAIG: Well, the first professional work I ever received payment for was actually a part-time job. I used to go around the corner from my house to a little candy store where the owner's son was a commercial art student.

He, in turn, had a friend in the neighborhood named Harry Lampert who was looking for an assistant. The assistant was to keep the files in order, rule pages, do lettering and make himself generally useful. At his request, I brought him some samples of my lettering which he liked well enough to give me the job… for $1 a week.

ROGER: Was that the Harry Lampert?

JOHNNY: Yes, he was an artist for the downtown office of National Publications, better

Johnny Craig

One of the finest draftsman to put pencil & brush to paper!

BY ROGER HILL

Craig's werewolf from "Curse of the Full Moon!" in *Crypt of Terror* #17 (Apr/May 1950), the 1st issue

known as DC. At that time, DC had two offices, one, midtown on Lexington Avenue; and a downtown office at 225 Lafayette Street. Bill's father, M.C. Gaines, was in charge of that office.

Johnny Craig imbues the main character with real terror in "Till Death..." from *The Vault of Horror* #28 (Dec/Jan 1952-1953)

Although Joe Orlando did the interior art for "Who's Next?" (*Crime Suspenstories* #16, Apr/May 1953), Craig did the historic cover

They put out *The Flash, Green Lantern,* and *Wonder Woman*, among others, and when I met Harry Lampert, he was doing "The King," a crime fighter in a tuxedo.

ROGER: John, do you have any idea what year this was?

JOHNNY: I think that was in 1938.

ROGER: What did you do after that?

JOHNNY: Let's see, I worked for Harry Lampert for a year and a half at least, until he entered the Army in 1939 or '40. His editor and friend, Sheldon Mayer at DC down on Lafayette Street, took me under his wing and for a while I freelanced doing the lettering on his strip called "Scribbly." That was during the school months.

During the following summer, he asked me to come down to the office and work full-time as one of the staff artists... pasting up, making corrections, doing the lettering and things like that. I want to say that I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to both Sheldon Mayer *and* Harry Lampert. As a rather wild young kid, I know I gave them both plenty of headaches and problems, but they were patient and understanding and seemed to have more knowledge and faith in my own future than I did.

ROGER: How did you get a job with EC?

JOHNNY: After I returned from the service in WWII and got married in 1946, I again went to work for M.C. Gaines in the art department. During the previous war years, he had sold his interests in DC publications and was engrossed in publishing a line of educational titles under the banner Educational Comics.

I don't recall precisely when the name was changed from Educational Comics to Entertaining Comics, but whenever it happened, I was already there. Since the educational line was not overly successful, other titles were introduced such as *Moon Girl* and *International*, for example. Possibly the firm's name was changed then, although I don't think they ever relinquished the Educational name... but only reserved it for their educational line of magazines.

It was about this time that I started doing covers and artwork for this new line, and only shortly after that M.C. Gaines passed away. That was when Bill Gaines came in to take over. Even though the lawyers, accountants, and bank people had advised Bill's mother to sell the business, she wanted it to continue and asked Bill to come down and take over the helm, and he did. That's when the real changes began.

ROGER: After you were actually working on the New Trend ECs, were you still doing any kind of freelancing at all?

This panel from "Understudies" in *Crime Suspenstories* #21 (Feb/Mar 1954) is a superb example of Johnny Craig's mastery of lighting and shadow

JOHNNY: About the only thing I can recall having done on a freelance basis while I was with EC was in the very early stages. I think I did a job for an outfit known as Fox Publications. I forget just what the job was, but I think it was a seven or eight page western. I waited ages to get paid but finally received more than I was supposed to. Perhaps they paid interest, but whatever, I think I'm the only (Fox) artist who ever came out ahead of the game.

ROGER: What were your feelings when EC decided to drop their pre-trend titles and start the New Trend of science-fiction and horror? Did you have anything to do with the decision?

JOHNNY: Naturally, I seem to recall being quite pleased with the idea of coming out with a new line of material that we felt would sell very well… and that would be interesting to both write and draw. I was pleased but I don't think I had much to do with the actual decision. It was mostly Feldstein's idea, I believe, but there were three-way conferences in and around that office all the time between Bill and I, since Al and I worked together in the same room, at almost the same desk, practically. But I give credit to Al and Bill for getting the brainstorm.

ROGER: Did you actually create the Vault Keeper and is there any particular reason why you stuck with the *Vault of Horror* during the entire New Trend?

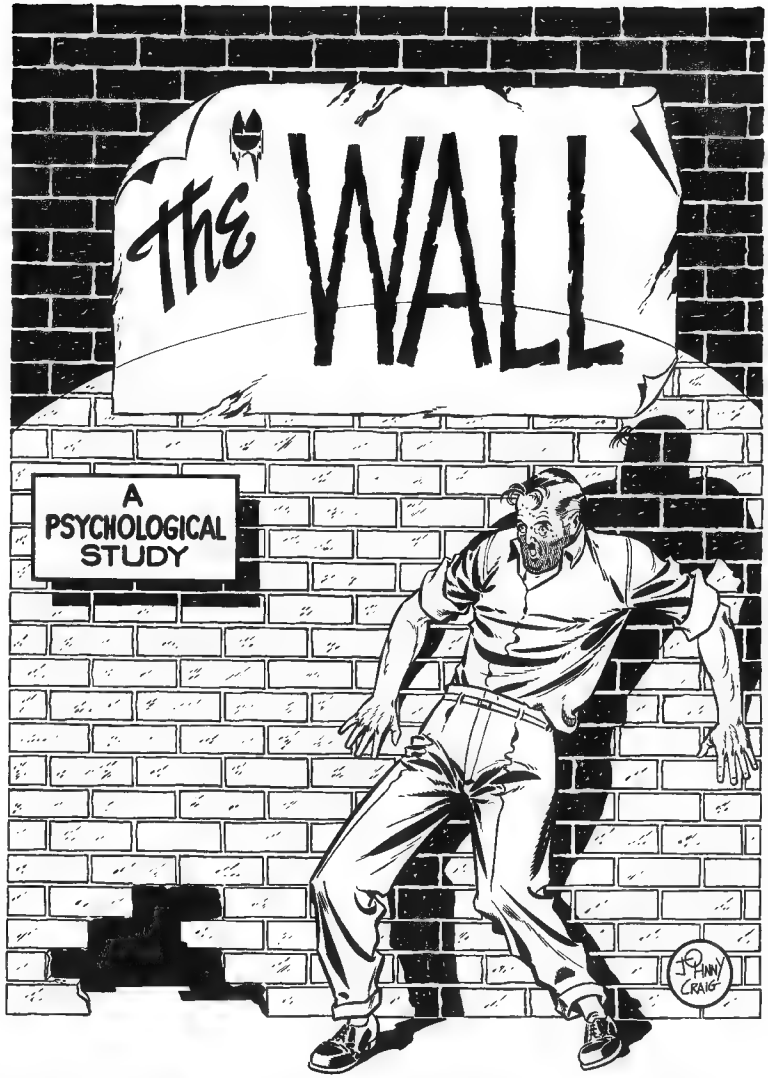
JOHNNY: Well, I created the visual… the picture of the Vault Keeper. The *idea* of the Vault Keeper was not necessarily mine—not necessarily anyone's that I remember. I believe it was simply the natural follow-up to the success we had with the *Crypt* stories. After we decided on the Vault Keeper, I think I was doing one lead story in the *Vault of Horror*. But because I was such a slow artist, I couldn't always do the Vault Keeper's wind-up story in the *Crypt of Terror*. Consequently, most of the stories that I did were for the lead in the *Vault of Horror*, while some other artist had to fill in to do the Vault Keeper wind-up stories in the *Crypt of Terror* and, later, in the *Haunt of Fear* as well.

ROGER: Did you find it difficult to meet the schedule?

JOHNNY: I *always* found it difficult to meet the schedule. I *still* find it difficult to meet schedules. But then, as now, it's usually because I am rarely satisfied with my first attempt to draw anything. Since I had never been fortunate enough to have any extensive formal art schooling, I was forced at a very early age to learn drawing by continually searching for flaws in my own work… and then drawing it again and again to try to correct those flaws.

I am not always successful in these attempts and the work shows it, I am certain… but I look upon each drawing as something to learn from and I work slowly so that I may search for knowledge as well as mistakes.

I have never earned as much money as many other artists who turn out a larger volume of work, but then many artists draw the very same way today as they did ten or twelve years ago without visible improvement at all. I know I am a more knowledgeable artist today than I was yesterday, but if my present work doesn't show it, I think it's due to the fact that I'm not doing very much actual drawing now, but practically all inking… and one gets stale very quickly.



Johnny Craig splash from "The Wall" in *Haunt of Fear* #15 (May/Jun 1950)

Johnny Craig

To answer your question, I was supposed to do at least three stories a month. I was lucky if I did one.

ROGER: Did you have control of the visual and editorial format of the *Vault of Horror*?

JOHNNY: Only in the last few issues did I have a major control of what was to go into the book. The contents of the books were always the result of long and detailed story conferences in which we worked out the types and plots of the stories, as well as the artists who were going to do them.

ROGER: Who was usually in these conferences with you?

JOHNNY: There was always Bill Gaines, of course, but mostly they were three-way talks, with Al Feldstein sitting in, too.

ROGER: Did you do most of the color schemes for the *Vault of Horror* covers?

JOHNNY: Yes, I think I did most of the early ones, at least up until perhaps issue #30. After that, I think Marie Severin started doing the coloring until the last few issues—#37 or 39, or something like that. I may have had one or two in between.

ROGER: Many of he "Voodoo" stories seem be illustrated by you. Were the editors partial in their assignments of this type of story, or was it your own preference?

JOHNNY: I'll have to say it was my own preference. I always preferred the voodoo type of story or the haunted house type… or a story with a mystical theme rather than a tale that had its impact relying on blood and gore and similar shock values. I think if you were to go back through any of the issues I did, you'll find that most of my stories are on a quieter vein of horror than either the *Haunt of Fear* or the *Crypt of Terror*.

ROGER: How much time did you spend working at the EC offices verses working home?

JOHNNY: That's not as easy to answer as it may seem. I know I spent a great deal of time down at those offices, both day shift or night shift, trying to find a schedule and an atmosphere that would help me turn out more work than I did. I prefer to work alone and at home, if I can, provided the conditions there are equally quiet, peaceful… and conducive to work.

ROGER: Do you recall which *Vault of Horror* cover you liked best?

JOHNNY: Specifically, I don't know if I have great favorite. Any selection I made would have to be one of the later issues, just before we stopped publishing it. I can't put my finger on any particular one, although for some vague reason I liked #40, which was the last issue. But, no, there were one or two others that I liked as well, only I can't remember their issue numbers. Perhaps it was #36 and 37.

IT WOULD BE A GREAT FALSEHOOD TO SAY THAT I AM OF STRONG CHARACTER. I HAVE NEVER BEEN THAT. IT IS ONLY HERE, IN THIS ROOM OF DAY-DREAMS, THAT I BECOME STRONG AND IMPORTANT. (SIGH)

One of Craig's favorite stories "Pipe Dream" (*VOH* #36) was drawn by Krigstein

ROGER: Which story did you like best?

JOHNNY: One of the stories I liked best, plotwise, was in issue #36, called "Which Witch is Which?" I liked it because the final twist was something I think up to that time had never been done before, at least not in comics, that I knew of. As for the actual writing and wordage, I'm fond of the story, "Pipe Dream," also in issue #36, because it's more delicate, flowery, almost poetic, and there were some passages I liked in an earlier tale, "Easel Kill Ya."

ROGER: Were the *Vault of Horror* stories your first professional writing, or had you done previous efforts?

JOHNNY: I don't remember doing any writing before the *Vault of Horror*, but I probably did, and it was probably for EC.

ROGER: When you finally had control of the *Vault of Horror* beginning with the cover of #36, you seemed to be experimenting more and more with each succeeding cover. The man taut at the end of a rope (#37)… the eerie lighting of the cover of #38… the dramatic effect achieved on #40. Why were these so different from the normal, straight illustrative covers that came before?

JOHNNY: They appear to be different because I *tried* to give them a different interpretation. Since I had become the new editor, I wanted the book to have a different outlook, a different appearance to represent that fact. I do think I had a slightly different approach to the feeling of horror and now that I had full control, I wanted to see if I could interpret that feeling and still make it successful and effective.

ROGER: What made you add in the female counterpart, Drusilla, in the last few issues of the *Vault of Horror*?

JOHNNY: I don't remember exactly. I'm not sure there was a reason. Anytime there's a chance to draw a pretty girl, I'm not sure I have to have a reason. It was probably to begin or to offer something new within the *Vault* itself, other than the same old character saying the same old things. Eventually, if she had become popular enough, Drusilla may have taken charge of the book, or possibly may have been given a book of her own. Who knows?

ROGER: Did you think EC stories and art, near the end, were really guilty of going overboard on sex and violence?

JOHNNY: In retrospect, most of the stories seem rather tame in comparison to some of the things that are in view today, but at the time I do think many of the stories were too gory, too ugly, simply too gruesome for my particular taste in horror tales. But then, they were horror tales, not ghost stories; and horror can be many things to many people.

In contrast, blood and gore wasn't necessarily "horror" to any number of readers. I think it might well have been kept to a minimum pictorially at least, which, to my taste, would have lent a higher quality to the books.

The problem was, I think, that the reader became accustomed to the stories and gradually felt a lessening in their impact. They clamored for more and our competitors, trying to copy and outdo us, gave it to them. We, in turn, had to compete with that. It just became a vicious circle.

I don't think our mags were overly sexy, and am sure we didn't offend people in that regard.

ROGER: Which of the New Direction titles did you like best?

JOHNNY: Of the New Direction titles, I greatly enjoyed *Extra*. At the time, it was the most fascinating kind of story I could have wanted to do, precisely what I loved to do. I liked it because it was a clean type of story, a clean type of book, and it had many advantages for me as editor. It had an engaging character with whom I could become acquainted, consider a friend, and get to know… someone whom I could develop and build on. It gave me the chance to take him anywhere the world and do any kind of story that I felt like writing. I could bring in characters, take them out, and, in general, had unlimited freedom. It was great.

ROGER: "Dateline: Algiers" in *Extra* #3 is considered a classic by collectors…

JOHNNY: That story was one of my favorites… not only because it gave me the chance to use so many words, but because it gave me the opportunity to try to present the story in a more adult fashion. It gave me the opportunity to use a more interesting, illustrative fashion, with more freedom as to the display of the pictures… and more time or space to work with words, which I previously hadn't been able to do using the standard format.

ROGER: Since your hobby was—and still is—photography, was it you who thought of the idea of producing the photos of the three Ghoulunatics?

JOHNNY: No, that project was under the direction of Paul Kast who was on the office staff and a close personal friend of Bill Gaines. It was his idea and he, Al Feldstein, Bill Gaines and I got together for the picture taking session, but from then on it was Paul's baby. He handled all the mailings, making the prints, all the correspondence and work that it involved. I remember that when he had filled something like 10,000 orders, he took the entire EC staff and their wives to a stage show and treated us to a tremendous dinner at Mama Leoni's. We had a marvelous evening.

ROGER: How did you feel about working on the Picto-Fiction magazines?

JOHNNY: I enjoyed it very much. I think most of the artists did. It was a great challenge in that even though we were allowed a greater freedom in depicting the story, it required a greater ability to do the job right. All in all, it was a very fine experience and something which I think most of the artists welcomed because it made us feel we were advancing and doing a better grade of artwork—a more illustrative type of artwork. I'm sorry it didn't go over better than it did.

Craig splash from "Fire Trap!" in *Crime SuspenStores* #20

ROGER: What did you do after you left EC?

JOHNNY: Oh, if I remember correctly, I freelanced for a while; but primarily I just left the industry itself and went into advertising. I began in an art studio where practically all of the work was related to television commercials for some of the biggest sponsors and ad agencies in the country. I left to become an agency Art Director and after a few more years, was offered the position of Vice President and Art Director with a large ad agency/motion picture firm here in Pennsylvania where I now live. I stayed with them for seven to eight years, then decided to freelance again. I guess the agency life is just not for me.

ROGER: What brought you back to comics in the '60s? I'm referring to the 1964 story you did for for ACG's *Unknown Worlds* #36 and the 1966 work for *Creepy* and *Eerie*.

JOHNNY: Well, offhand, I could say money… but that's not the entire story. Having worked for eight or ten years in the agency field, I did have the opportunity to do many illustrations. But I've never been really satisfied with the results, not only because there is such extreme deadline pressure, but because I had to contend with so many other activities and responsibilities as an art director and executive. Consequently, I do like to just sit down and draw something and be relaxed while doing it… and when someone phones and says they want to pay me for doing something so nice and pleasant, it's just had to turn down.

ROGER: Many fans have been puzzled over the pen name, Jay Taycee, which you used on some of your early work for *Creepy* and *Eerie*. Is there any particular reason for using it?

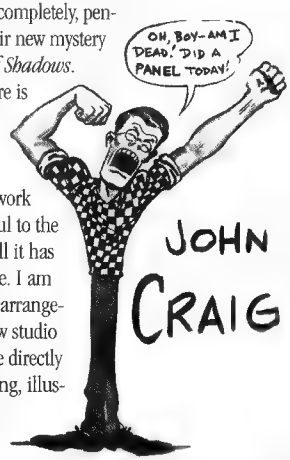
JOHNNY: Oh, yes. At the time, the firm which employed me didn't want me to be doing illustrations for any of the other agencies and studios in the local area here in Pennsylvania. Though it didn't really apply to work done for firms in New York, I tried to honor their request anyway. I merely used the initials of my name, John Thomas Alexis Craig, and formed J.T.A.C. or 'Jay Taycee.'

ROGER: Now you're doing the inking for Marvel's *Iron Man* each month… Didn't you begin doing both pencils and inks?

JOHNNY: When I started doing "Iron Man," I always did the inking of my own pencils. However, they were never quite satisfied with the type of layout or pictorial presentation I would give, so I began doing only the inking on "Iron Man."

Now and then they switch me over to inking other strips such as Sub-Mariner and I also do an occasional strip completely, pencils and inks for their new mystery magazine, *Tower of Shadows*.

As far as my future is concerned, I don't expect to stay in comics forever, though I enjoy the work and am truly grateful to the entire industry for all it has given and taught me. I am now slowly making arrangements to build a new studio and to become more directly involved with painting, illustration, and portrait work.



EC Pre-Trend Romance Comics

by David R. Burlington

An extremely popular comics genre in the late 1940s, was romance comics. Indeed, their red hot popularity in that era soon led to a glut and an industry-wide shakeout. Bill Gaines, now universally hailed as a visionary, was a follower and not a leader in this trend. He had only recently taken over EC from his late father and had changed its name from Educational Comics to "Entertaining Comics." Gaines was still feeling his way in the form of *Modern Love*, *a Moon, a Girl... Romance*, and *Saddle Romances*. The latter two retained the numbering of, and were revamped titles of *Moon Girl* and *Saddle Justice*. *Modern Love* (issues #1 through 8; June/July 1949 through August/September 1950), *A Moon, A Girl... Romance* (issues #9 through 12; September/October 1949 through March/April 1950), and *Saddle Romances* (issues #9 through 11; November/December 1949 through March/April 1950) were uneven and aped the more popular romance comics of their time. Still, a little of the inchoate EC magic was there to the discerning eye.

At the time of their publication, the new titles were primarily hyped in overheated house ads. These advised readers that every issue contained "true love tales at their illustrated best," complete with "heart-rending scenes, poignant drama, and blissful moments!" Most issues contained advice to the lovelorn columns purportedly authored by "Adrienne" and "Amy." Of course, they were actually written by Bill and Al Feldstein. The stories themselves seem campy by today's standards but were pretty much par for the course for that era. The "troubled" and "defiant" teens depicted there seem about as rebellious to us as missionaries or insurance salesmen.

EC romance covers are either by Feldstein, Graham Ingels, or the penciling/inking duo of Feldstein and Johnny Craig. Several artists were used who never made it into the New Trend lineup, including Walter T. Johnson and Bill Fraccio. Craig did very little work on

these romance titles, but his unmistakable inks complement what is thought to be Fraccio's pencils in the story "A Woman's Treachery" in *Modern Love* #3. Feldstein and Craig collaborations are signed "F.C. Aljon," an amalgamation of their names and initials. Of interest to enthusiasts, is the evolving collaboration of Harry Harrison and Wally Wood, who did many EC romance stories, some wonderful, some frankly underwhelming. Their work culminated in the beautifully rendered "Playtime Cowgirl" in *Saddle Romances* #11.

A representative EC romance story is "Prison Widow" in *a Moon, a Girl... Romance* #12. Illustrated by Feldstein, it presents itself as a true story with only the names changed "to conceal the identities of those involved." Of course, the stories were simply made up by Feldstein and Gaines, with possible outside help by hired writers. In the story, Harry is behind bars but wife Flo is determined to remain faithful. However, Jerry enters Flo's life and our lovers seem star-crossed, since Flo is afraid to tell Jerry she's married to a con. The house ad-promised "blissful moments" are especially endangered when Harry makes parole. In the end, love conquers all when Harry is conveniently killed in a gun battle with police, leaving Flo free to pitch woo with handsome, now-available Jerry.

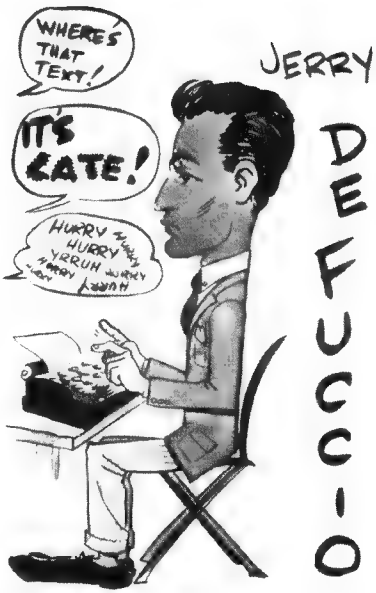
The most famous EC romance tale is also the least typical. "The Love Story to end all Love Stories" is the last story in the final EC romance comic, *Modern Love* #8. A vicious satire, the story sends up Gaines, Feldstein, EC, and the entire comics business. Many rival comic book publishers are lampooned as an ever-escalating romance comic glut (art imitating life?) leading to the suicides of the entire EC management team, and leaving the EC office copy boy to pick up the pieces. Presumably, he becomes rich riding the horror comic wave soon to come. This outcome is alluded to in "Horror Beneath the Streets" in *Haunt of Fear* #17 (actually the third issue of that title, September/October 1950). That story has Bill and Al discussing *Modern Love* by name, which they decide to drop in favor of horror comics after receiving sage publishing advice from none other than the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch!

As noted above, these romance comics are not EC at its New Trend best. However, they are simply good fun and can be enjoyed without undue comparison to Gaines' and Feldstein's later masterworks. The Ingels, Wood, and Feldstein art is an appreciated bonus. EC romance comics are a nice collectors' adjunct to the more scrutinized and popular EC crime, horror, shock, and science fiction fare.

"Silent Service!" from Two-Fisted Tales #32 (Mar/Apr 1953), art by Jack Davis

Life with... Harvey KURTZ

BY JERRY DE FUCCIO



Dr. John J. McGill, ingenious biology professor, came down the line like Admiral Perry reviewing his Navy. As usual, Dr. McGill paused at my microscope. "Mr. De Fuccio hard, reef, and steer. You have the abilities required of an ordinary seaman." Sure, I lingered over the small platforms of the stand of my microscope, on which the coasting entities were the objects of examination.

"Mr. De Fuccio, if you have any interest in your pre-med course, you would *label* what you see, just as your fellow biologists do. I want the *labels*! Give me amoeba, protozoa, naked rhizopods, nucleated mass of protoplasm. Better still, why not switch to drawing, an art course, and join the ranks of Walt Disney, an in-betweener!"

That night, I tried to abolish my raucous, sulking mood, thumbing the pages at Duff's comic books rack. EC publications was new to me, until I alighted on an eye-catching cover signed—Harvey—with a stick-figure alongside. It took me two or three "Harveys" with the little stick-figure to understand the sign of Harvey Kurtz*man*. Harvey had given a twist to a story, very much like "The Most Dangerous Game," with *his* script and art. (A young man on an island, given little time to run, being deliberately hunted down by guns and bow!)

That sort of action-adventure was beyond microscope to me. Quickly, I thought of sending Harvey Kurtzman some "material," without a thought of his editor or publisher. Direct! A simple address, 225 Lafayette Street. My choice was Booth Tarkington, American novelist and playwright. I had long admired Tarkington's "Penrod" and "Penrod and Sam." I surveyed every line in those joyful books!

I formalized the "Penrods" in panels and balloons, expecting an EC issue upon issue. In a short wait, Harvey returned my revision. He told me I had been very faithful with Tarkington's stories, but, they were not in public domain. Of course, the cinema had paid big money, something a comic book couldn't do!

It was about three weeks later that I received a surprise call from Harvey. Judging from "Penrod," he could use me as a legman and research guy. This was to be my entree to *Two-Fisted Tales*, and later, *Frontline Combat*.

The first thing Harvey taught me was how to use the library. I would accompany Harvey to the American History Room at the Fifth Avenue Library. The curator had a fabulous name, "Mr. Vigilante." He knew Harvey well and gladly took down the books requested.

Sometimes, we did get side-tracked and started reading otherwise, not the subject we needed. Harvey shook his head as we later departed the stone lions of the library.

Life with... Harvey Kurtzman

"In a day or so, we must come back to read about the Civil War, as intended!" Prior to my arrival at EC, I had started doing middle of magazine texts for *Two-Fisted Tales*. Often, I phoned Harvey from my home in Jersey City to his home in New Rochelle. My object was to tell him I had thought of a punch-ending for a filler and I wanted his approval. I'd hang on my phone despite many interruptions, "Jerry, the dry-cleaning man is here. Let me get the doorbell." In a sense, *I* was taken to the cleaner during a twenty-minute delay! My payment for finished story was about $25. When our family phone bill came in, my father, Dr. De Fuccio did not charge me, for holding the phone.

"So, you are a writer, now! Looks like all your pay went to New Rochelle."

My highlight working with Harvey was our discussion about submarines. I told Harvey I had something to beat the Harvard Classics, the Five Foot Shelf of Books. In my bedroom I had a *ten foot* shelf of books, on submarines. Sort of exaggeration, really. Harvey then insisted that I go to the submarine base in New London, Connecticut, to observe reality. He specified the noise of the klaxon—AH-OO-GA, AH-OO-GA, the ring of the diving alarm, the chime of the dinner bell. And, all the mechanism and the sub-mariners who were best to control it!

When I arrived at New London, the Officer of the Day was awaiting me. He had been informed by Harvey. I learned I was to go out on the training sub, the USS Guardfish; 40 miles out on the Sound.

First, I was asked to sign a form stating the military base would *not* be responsible if I were hurt or killed. For a moment, I was thinking it over. Was it worth it? Not at $30 a week. Still, Bill Gaines gave me unexpected benefits, to even things out. It was soon apparent that the captain and crew were strong, sturdy men. I had numerous notations about the hull, engine, and tank system (aptly demonstrated when we went from surface to underwater, reducing the vessel's buoyancy by means of filling her tanks with seawater.)

There was so much to jot down! Steering gear, diving gear, air system, water piping system, so distributed as to preclude all pumps being thrown out of commission, in an accident. Refrigeration and heating systems, also! Air regeneration, living arrangements (every bunk on top of a torpedo!), armament, periscopes, range finding.

Our script was ready, entitled "Silent Service" about an American sub to combat a Japanese destroyer. Jack Davis drawing!

Then it was lunchtime... if you call it lunch, on a sub. A cook asked what I'd care to eat. I tried to puzzle him. How about a Waldorf salad? The cook opened the "trap" in the floor, went down a ladder, and began throwing heads of lettuce *and* walnuts up to my level. Indeed, I had a Waldorf salad!

Harvey had instructed me to phone him at the office, and when I got back to the submarine base. Just to be sure I got *there*. Instead, I ran over to Western Union and sent him this report:

Many great hearts are asleep in the deep. Glub, Glub!

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EC and Me

by Lewis Forro

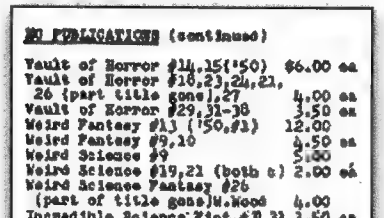
When I heard *Comic Book Marketplace* was baking a cake for EC's 50th Anniversary I wanted to contribute something. I can't talk about how great EC was because everybody reading this magazine already knows that. I can't talk about why they were so great because that story has been told many times in many places. The only little candle I can put on the cake is to offer my memories of what it was like for me to collect EC comic books in those long ago days of the 1970s.

Before the Quest

If I had been born in 1944, I might have been an original EC Fan-Addict… but I was born in 1954, so instead I was fated to become a Marvel Zombie. From 1965 to 1971 it was my duty to throw every nickel at completing my Marvel comic collection. It was marginally acceptable for a Marvel fan to buy an occasional DC or Gold Key comic if the price didn't cut into your Marvel buying budget. But it was sacrilege to devote serious money to another line of comic books.

For me, even in the late 1960s, serious money would have been required for EC collecting. No bookstore or anybody in my hometown of Savannah, Georgia knew what an EC comic was, much less had any for sale. So mail order dealers were the only recourse. Take a look at Howard Rogofsky's price list from 1967. A copy of EC's *Weird Fantasy* # 9 or 10 cost $4.50. From that same list you could buy Marvel's *Avengers* #1 for $4.50. As a 13-year-old boy with a weekly allowance of barely $3, buying a comic book at that price was a major commitment. There was no way I could justify spending that kind of money on EC comics which I had never even seen, only heard about; better to stick with a known product like Marvel comics.

Still, EC wouldn't go away. I subscribed to *The Rocket's Blast-Comicollector* or *RB&CC* for a few issues in the late 1960s. The *RB&CC* was the most important fanzine in those days. It had mostly ads but articles as well. From this publication, I learned that one of Marvel's artists, Wally Wood, had previously been an EC artist. I also enjoyed reading the sporadically distributed Warren magazines *Eerie* and *Creepy*. Again from *RB&CC* (and other fanzines) I learned that many of my favorite Warren artists like Al Williamson and Reed Crandall had also worked at EC a long, long time ago.



EC PUBLICATIONS (continued)

Vault of Horror #14,15('50)	$6.00 ea
Vault of Horror #18,23,24,21, 26 (part title gone),27	4.00 ea
Vault of Horror #29,31-38	3.50 ea
Weird Fantasy #13 ('50,#1)	12.00
Weird Fantasy #9,10	4.50 ea
Weird Science #9	5.00
Weird Science #19,21 (both c)	2.00 ea
Weird Science Fantasy #26 (part of title gone)W.Wood	4.00
Incredible Science Fict.#3,3)	3.50 ea
Impact #1,2 NO #4	1.50 ea
Humbug #3,9 (not an EC)	2.50 ea
Tales of Terror Annual #2,3	20.00 ea
Crime Illustrated #2	3.00
Confessions Illustrated #1	3.00
Shock Illustrated #1,2	3.00 ea
Shock Illustrated #) (only 200 copies printed)	75.00
Picture Stories from Bible #1,2 (New Testament)	3.00 ea
Stories from Bible #2,4(old)	3.00 ea
Stories from Bible(Life of Christ edition)	3.50
Stories from Science #1,2	3.00 ea
Stories from World Hist'y #2	3.00
Stories from Amer.Hist'y#2-4	3.00 ea
Happy Houlihans #1,2	3.00 ea
Saddle Justice #3,4,5,7	3.50 ea
Gunfighter #9,14	3.50 ea
International #3	3.50
Crime Patrol #6(Moongirl)	5.00
Crime Patrol #7-11	3.50 ea
Tiny Tot #1	3.50
Modern Love #1,2,3,5,8	3.50 ea
Land of the Lost #1,2,4,7	3.50 ea
Animal Fables #1,6	3.50 ea
War Against Crime #1-4,6,7	3.50 ea
Blackstone Fights Crime #1	3.50
Moon Girl #1-5,7,8	5.00 ea

These frequent references to EC in the fanzines and dealer price lists continued to arouse my curiosity until I was compelled to order (from *RB&CC*) one of their special issues, *The Rocket's Blast Special* #7 from 1967… devoted entirely to EC! The Wood and Williamson art, though poorly reproduced, was tantalizing. The long article about EC gave me my first detailed look at this extinct, but apparently fabulous line of comic books. But Marvel still came first, EC would have to wait a few more years.

By late 1971, the great crusade of finishing my Marvel collection was almost over and I was very amenable to other collecting projects. My first subscription to *RB&CC* had expired a few years earlier and I had recently renewed it. The pivotal issue, #87, arrived sometime in early 1972. The previously sketchy references to EC had now blossomed into full page ads which knocked me over the head, advertising the hardcover *Horror Comics of the 1950s*, the *EC Portfolio Two*, and Frank Frazetta's print of the cover art to *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29. But most amazing was a two page ad for the upcoming "EC Fan-Addict Convention" in New York City. Somebody was actually promoting a convention devoted to a single comic book company that had died out 17 years before. Enough was enough. I had been listening to the sizzle on and off for six years. It was time to bite into the steak.

The Quest

That first bite was expensive. From a major mail order dealer I ordered an ungraded copy of *Weird Science-Fantasy* #25 for $12. I had just paid $30 for a Very Good+ copy of Marvel's most expensive book, *Fantastic Four* #1 and here I was spending over one-third that amount on a still largely mysterious product. I wondered if I really knew what I was doing. When the book came it did barely pass for a Fine, at least until the next day when the spine split completely in half.

Condition aside, the contents of the book validated all the publicity I had been subjected to over the years. The writing and the art really were superb. I was delighted to see the Al Williamson rendered story "A Sound of Thunder" was adapted from the famous Ray Bradbury story I had read years earlier. EC had actually adapted a story by one of my favorite science fiction authors. How come nobody ever told me they did things like that?

Yes, I was hooked. But with comic book prices reaching unheard of levels in the early 1970s (and not being even distantly related to the Rockefeller family) I knew I had to restrict my collecting in some way. I decided to focus on mostly EC's science fiction titles.

Still trapped in the comic book wasteland of Savannah, I spent the next three years mail ordering as many high-grade *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* issues as possible. Each book cost between $15 and $20... if you were lucky. The books had to compete with college expenses and keeping my jalopy of a car on the road. With an after-school job paying the minimum wage of $1.70 per hour, my EC medicine came in small doses in those days.

Sometime in the mid-1970s I saw an ad in Alan Light's *The Buyer's Guide to Comic Fandom* for the Atlanta Fantasy Fair, the first comic book convention to be held in Atlanta, Georgia. In all my years of comic collecting I had never been to a comic book convention. What few there were had always been held in impossibly distant places like New York City or San Diego. Now finally here was a convention only a few hours away.

I somehow cobbled together a few hundred dollars and took the bus to the big city. The dealers room in the hotel was very small which in no way precluded that rush of excitement everybody gets when they attend their first comic book convention. After 10 years of rummaging around in used book stores, hustling friends, and shooting craps with the mail order dealers, it was almost too much to believe when I saw that room full of tables laden with comic books.

I held back just enough money for a cab ride back to the bus stop and a sandwich for lunch... the rest I spent on EC comics! The *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* titles were priced to scare off J. Paul Getty but I found one dealer who had the *Incredible Science Fiction* issues and another who had most of the rest of the *Weird Science-Fantasy* issues I needed. In high-grade they were still only about $20 each and I scooped them up like a hungry beggar at a banquet.

At every convention, among all the books you can't afford, there is always one you remember the most. This time it was *Weird Fantasy* #21 with that incredible Al Williamson and Frank Frazetta cover... the only EC cover signed by both of them. Priced at $70, I had to wait for another day.

Next year there was an even larger comic book convention in Atlanta by another promoter. I was staying with relatives in Birmingham, Alabama and so I took the bus to this one as well. I allocated some money to buying a few pre-hero Marvel monster comics, but the bulk of it again went to ECs. The prices were a little more reasonable this time. I distinctly remember buying a nice copy of *Weird Fantasy* #15 for only $15. It had one of the better Al Feldstein "monster, girl, and space ship" covers. The dealer was very reluctant to sell it but I guess he needed the money more than the memories.

In 1977 I joined the Air Force and found myself stationed in Sacramento, California. I had more money now but comic book prices remained un-cooperative and continued climbing so "the aspiration to acquisition" equation hadn't really changed. There were one or two large conventions in San Francisco every year by then. I drove there several times over the next four years, always in search of more EC booty. My most memorable EC procurement from these San Francisco expeditions was *Weird Science* #16 with the famous Wally Wood "Mars Attacks" cover. I bought it from Ron Pussell of Redbeard's Book Den. It's probably just as well for my blood pressure that I can't remember what I paid Ron.

By the late 1970s, speciality comic book stores were sprouting up here and there and I regularly visited the one or two in Sacramento. Over a four year period of snooping around in these stores I got lucky only once but it was worth waiting for. The downtown store turned up a batch of high-grade EC science fiction comics. Included was the Holy Grail of EC science fiction issues, the *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29 with the Frank Frazetta cover in Very Fine condition. This was the type of second-mortgage book you couldn't buy at a show and though cheaper here I still paid $90 for it. A few days later I had it with me at the office so I could sneak a peek at it now and again. A female co-worker noticed it and asked how much I paid for it. I made a mistake and told the truth. Naturally she thought I was totally insane.

The Dilemma

In the 1960s the condition of comic books wasn't too important. There were no price guides, no comic book stores, no conventions outside of a few hotel basements in Manhattan and absolutely no mail order dealer individually graded every comic on their lists. Look at any dealer list before 1972 or so. The catch-phrase was "good to mint" and trust me you never got the "mint" copy. You rarely received anything in the mail better than a Very Good.

Throughout the 1970s, however, condition became increasingly important and I found myself entrenched in that set of collectors that many other collectors consider to be psychologically disturbed: I had become a "high grade" collector. Or in less polite parlance, a "condition freak." For such a collector, on a limited income and trying to collect high demand comics like ECs, the world can be very frustrating.

Still, by 1978 after seven years of diligent collecting at considerable expense I had acquired a nearly complete set of all EC science fiction comics in high-grade by the standards of that day. But the science fiction titles only composed about 25% of EC's total output. The horror, crime and war titles were still out there and calling for me to collect them too. I didn't want to collect lesser grade books but did I have the stamina or the money to tackle the remaining EC universe in high-grade? I wasn't completely sure, but I was completely sure I had to read every EC story ever published. Quite a nasty dilemma.

Reprints to the Rescue

One fateful day in 1978 or 1979 I walked into the more upscale of Sacramento's handful of comic stores, Comics and Comix which was headquartered in Berkley and according to local lore, was one of the first comic book stores in the country. There on the counter sat the answer to my dilemma. It was a handsome oversize slipcase with four hardcover volumes inside. The gold colored title on the blue slipcase spine read The Complete Weird Science. This was the first set in publisher Russ Cochran's ambitious project to reprint the entire EC comic line in a format to please even fussy condition freaks like me. With a reasonable $60 price tag, it cost the same as a single nice condition EC comic book. I think I knew then my EC original comic collecting days were drawing to a close.

By 1981 I was stationed in San Bernardino, California whose only claim to geographic significance is that it is only three hours driving time from there to the San Diego Comic Con. But even my exposure to the Valhalla-like dealers room at this con couldn't keep up my dwindling EC collecting spirits. High prices, more interest in other types of comics and Cochran's reliable reprints all allowed my quest for ECs to fizzle out. Not to be sad though, it was a heck of a ride while it lasted.

The Easy Chair Awaits

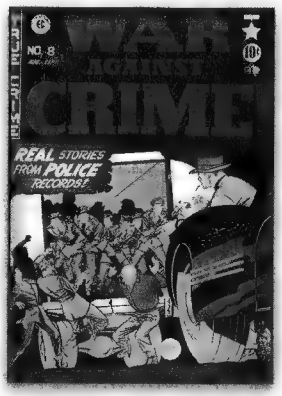
I still have every EC comic book I ever bought, including the heart-breaker one with the split spine. They are stacked neatly in my combination safe along with the rest of a big chunk of my comic collecting life. On rare occasions I open the safe, take out those ECs and put them on my glass top dining room table. I look carefully at each cover and let the glory years of the 1970s wash over me again. Of course, at today's valuations I can't handle or read them and ECs were made to be read. So I put them back in the safe. I walk to my mantle over the fireplace where The Complete EC Library is proudly displayed. I pull out one of the volumes, sink into my leather easy chair and prop up my feet. For a moment I enjoy the comforting weight of the volume in my hands and then I open it and begin to read.

EC Pre-Trend Crime Comics

by David R. Burlington

At the time Bill Gaines took over the reins at EC, another popular genre was crime comics. The mid to late 1940s were the glory days of crime comics and Gaines probably felt he could not go wrong, business-wise, with such subject matter. Thus, he went to work on the two earliest EC crime titles, *War Against Crime* (issue #1 through 11; Spring 1948 through February/March 1950) and *Crime Patrol* (issues #7 through 16; Summer 1948 through February/March 1950). Later would come the much more renowned *Crime SuspenStories*.

Johnny Craig did all the covers for *Crime Patrol*. Many of the series' stories are illustrated by Craig, Al Feldstein, and Graham Ingels, along with numerous other nearly anonymous toilers who did not make the "cut" to the New Trend. The art of Feldstein and Craig is very similar to their later EC work, but Ingels is significantly different; his development is astonishing here.



The cover of *Crime Patrol* #15 could just as well be a *Tales From the Crypt* cover with only a logo change. One realizes that Gaines, Feldstein, and Craig "got it right" almost at once. This issue also sees the first appearance of the Crypt Keeper, who is much less outlandish and punning here than in his later incarnation. This first tale, entitled "Return From the Grave," is illustrated by Feldstein. Oddly, it does not lead off the issue but is the book's windup. Was Gaines playing it safe in case horror didn't sell? A straight, albeit exquisitely illustrated, Craig crime story is the leadoff here. Issue #15 also features an interesting Feldstein/Craig art collaboration in "The Swindle by Flame." *Crime Patrol* #16 has exactly the look and ambience of #15 and by issue #17 the name change to *The Crypt of Terror* was a fait accompli.

In *War Against Crime*, we again see Johnny Craig handling all the cover chores. Most of the art is by him, Ingels, Harry Harrison and Wally Wood, Feldstein, John Alton, Stan Asch, and a couple of others. *War Against Crime* follows the same format as *Crime Patrol* with essentially straight crime stories and attempts at film noirish depictions of petty criminal existence. Unfortunately, the hackneyed "crime does not pay" message is found here but is not troweled on with quite the obviousness of other crimes. While the writing and art are above the typical comics standards of the day (and that certainly is not saying much), it is plain that EC had yet to hit its stride. As in its sister publication, the first straight horror issue of *War Against Crime* is its penultimate one. This first Vault Keeper tale, also illoed by Feldstein, is "Buried Alive" in issue #10. In its look, it is identical to Feldstein's Crypt Keeper tale over in *Crime Patrol*. However, perhaps Gaines was a little more sanguine about horror comics' chances because "Buried Alive" leads off issue #10. Revealingly, the upper left sidebar blurb was changed from "true crime" to "horror" by issue #11, the last *War Against Crime* published before the title change to the *Vault of Horror* in the April/May 1950 issue.

Readers expecting "state of the art" EC crime and horror may be mildly disappointed with *War Against Crime* and *Crime Patrol*. However, those appreciating the evolution of EC's script and art quality over time will be fascinated by these embryonic tales, precursors of great things to come, not only in EC horror, but in *Crime SuspenStories* as well.

"Love" and Marriage in the EC Universe

By David R. Burlington

It's safe to assume that Bill Gaines, Al Feldstein, Johnny Craig, Jack Oleck, Carl Wessler, and the other EC writers meant for their horror and crime yarns to be perceived only as entertainment. However, literature cannot be totally divorced from either its moment in history or its authorship. A disturbing streak of deep cynicism regarding love, marriage, and the relationship between men and women permeates most EC yarns. The stereotypes of conniving "gold-digging" females and "terrified of commitment" males finds frequent expression there.

In Johnny Craig's "...And All Through the House" in *Vault of Horror* #35, the murdered husband's only offense is that he bored his poker-wielding wife.

Incongruously, Craig's cover illustration for this issue depicts a husband assaulting his wife rather than vice versa. Only in the EC universe does a husband give his wife a giftwrapped coffin for Christmas! Ironically, his wife is undone by a male far worse than her late husband in the person of a demented criminal dressed as St. Nick.

The finality of matrimony is nowhere more literally examined than in "Marriage Vow" in *Haunt of Fear* #26. Graham Ingels superbly depicts Martin Saunders' desperate yet futile attempt to escape his wife Eva's clutches; however, she simply refuses to die, even though he has dutifully impaled her on a spiked fence.

The Old Witch's tale in *Vault of Horror* #25, "Collection Completed," shows that men can be just as swinish and nasty as women, with a husband gratuitously murdering his wife's pet simply to torment her. Her taxidermic revenge obviously impressed HBO's *Tales from the Crypt* enough to warrant this story's inclusion in that television series.

Amazingly, happily married couples do inhabit the EC universe on occasion. In "'Til Death" in *Vault of Horror* #28, Johnny Craig limns the story of a couple so happy together that the husband's voodoo-practicing plantation workers re-animate his wife when she dies, with horrific (and odoriferous) results. Not even the grave can long separate couples destined to be together. An almost comically unhappily married couple are put through their paces by Bernie Krigstein in "More Blessed to Give..." in *Crime SuspenStories* #24. The author's own views of a woman's "place" seep out in the story's language: "He was sick of her criticism, her aggressiveness... Men in the EC universe seem to marry women and then spend the rest of their lives trying to escape from what they consider marital purgatory. The happy ending, EC style, finds both of them dead by the others' hand.

The ultimate "women as suffocaters" story has to be "Squeeze Play" in *Shock SuspenStories* #13, drawn by Frank Frazetta. It tells the story of Harry and Cora, who seem happy until Cora reveals she is pregnant (of course, pregnancy is never overtly mentioned, but that conclusion is inescapable). A judiciously timed shove out of a speeding roller coaster at Coney Island rids Harry of his predicament. Harry's thoughts about his possible future tell us everything"—tied down, smothered, trapped, conned" and "stayin' in every night with a bawlin' brat." It is quite revealing that Harry literally suffocates in the story's windup.

Rape was an absolutely forbidden topic in 1950's comics, but that did not stop EC on several occasions, notably in "A Kind of Justice" in *Shock SuspenStories* #16. The two central concepts of this story will alternately please and enrage feminists. The rape victim is not portrayed as in any way to blame for her tragedy, contrary to the mainstream '50s idiocy of "she was asking for it." On the other hand, the rapist, an authority figure in the person of a policeman, goes unpunished. The story holds up amazingly well today.

Another '50's staple very much in evidence in the EC universe is the money hungry femme fatale, the "gold digger." The archetypal gold digger is found in the person of Lila in "Revenge" in *Crime SuspenStories* #7. The words put into her mouth by the author are instructive to reveal his perception of what women are really after:

I had gotten pretty fed up after ten years of splitting fingernails pounding a typewriter, so I sunk my last two bills into a ticket on one of those ten day cruises to South America. I figured I might be able to hook a rich husband and take it easy for a few years. The first night out of New York I met Willie.... Willie was no prize. He was past his prime, sagging in the middle... not very pretty. But Willie owned two oil wells! He had plenty of dough! So I gritted my teeth and played my hand.

At times, gold diggers even showed up in straight horror tales. "Only Sin Deep" in *Haunt of Fear* #24 aptly describes the Gaines-Feldstein predatory female, with Lorna thinking of men as her "pawns" and "playthings." This cautionary tale about greed also made it into the HBO lineup.

We see another avaricious female in Feldstein and Jack Kamen's "One for the Money..." in *Crime SuspenStories* #17 (incidentally, that issue's Craig cover must stand as the most graphic crime cover ever). We meet Ronald and Anita. He's spent his last dime keeping Anita in the lap of luxury and becomes unhinged when she scorns him now that he's tapped out. Anita's reaction to watching Ronald blow his brains out with a revolver is pure, unadulterated EC. She gazes at his corpse and with a smirk utters one word: "Sucker!" Her comeuppance, EC-style, is being dismembered and stashed in a steamer trunk. The story's point of view never seems to realize that Ronald was the author of his own destruction; he did not have to have an affair with Anita or attempt to impress her with his overspending. As is usual, the man's own failings are projected onto the nearest convenient, albeit wicked, female.

Spousal abuse has become a hot topic in the '90s, but it was examined on certain

(continued on page 91)

CANADIAN MADNESS

BY MEL TAYLOR

When *MAD* #1 (October/November 1952) hit the newsstands in the summer of '52, it didn't exactly take the comic world by storm. As a matter of fact, the first four issues of *MAD* all wound up in the red. As the story goes, *MAD* creator Harvey Kurtzman became so wary of publisher Bill Gaines' grim countenance he simply stopped asking about Educational Comics' fledgling humor title.

But, fortunately for posterity, something turned around with that money-losing fourth issue which would assure *MAD* a prominent place in publishing history.

In Kurtzman's *From Aargh! to Zap!*, he credits the proliferation of college humor magazines at the time with inspiring "not ideas but an attitude."

"Those magazines were outrageous in their approach to humor, and I wanted to be outrageous."

That turnaround fourth issue also added an essential ingredient which would become the hallmark of Kurtzman's tenure on *MAD*, and indeed the entire run to this very day.

After taking a parodical shot at Tarzan of the Apes in the second issue, Kurtzman began slanting the book toward more specific parodies of movies, television and the comics themselves. When Superduperman (a classic satire on the legal wranglings of DC and Fawcett Publications) appeared in *MAD* #4... the die was cast!

Little did Bill Gaines realize, when he enticed the obviously talented Kurtzman to stay in his employ by giving him a couple of war comics and an offbeat humor rag, that his future in the publishing business would rely entirely on this irreverent compendium of cheap shots and sleight-of-ham.

When the horror purge of the '50s essentially gutted EC, *MAD* survived by switching to magazine format in July of 1956. Not surprisingly, this switch afforded new distribution opportunities it had not enjoyed before the move from the comic rack to the newsstand. Suddenly, those college kids who were looking for something outrageous found it right up there beside the old staunchers such as *Time, Life,* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

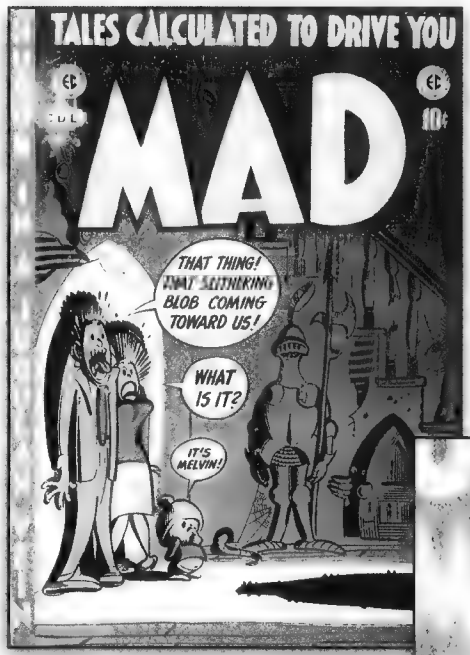
The move to the magazine rack also opened up previously untapped opportunities abroad, and, as Maria Reidelbech relates in her delightful history of America's most famous humor mag, *Completely Mad*, the earliest previously known foreign edition of *MAD*, a British edition edited by Ron Letchford, hit the stands in 1959.

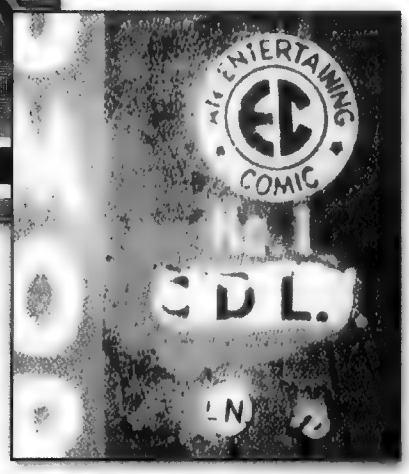
Surprisingly, while most of the jokes translated well, there were a few changes necessary... involving flats, pounds, and W.C.s. You see, the Brits don't live in apartments, spend dollars, or use the bathroom... in a manner of speaking, so it became necessary to translate from English to... well... English.

Before long, foreign editions in Swedish, Dutch, Finnish, Norwegian, Portuguese (Brazil), Chinese, Italian, German, and more spread the word around the world that this was the stuff that made Americans laugh.

Conspicuously absent from this list is a Canadian edition, which brings me back to *MAD* #1. Remember *MAD* #1?

With the end of wartime restrictions on American imports, brought about by the War Exchange Conservation Act of December 1940, Canada's indigenous comic industry, typified by the great Canadian "Whites" of the early '40s, came up against stiff competition from a flood of American comics which once more poured across the border. Further restrictions in





In contrast to the US version, the Canadian MAD #1 is printed on coarse-fiber stock and features "CDL" on the cover

EC's Neglected Masterwork:

Crime SuspenStories!

by David R. Burlington

While EC's horror and science fiction generates most of today's fan interest, EC aficionados should not overlook *Crime SuspenStories*. This title's 27 issue run (from October/November 1950 through February/March 1955) contains some of EC's best plots, as well as impeccable art from Kamen, Crandall, Evans, Ingels, and Craig. This title was Johnny Craig's only continuing New Trend assignment besides his regular *Vault of Horror* stint.

The usual *Crime SuspenStories* format was a cover and lead story by Craig, who wrote as well as drew his stories. The other three stories each issue were written by Al Feldstein, at least until early to mid 1954 when he and publisher Bill Gaines turned to outside writers, especially Otto Binder and Carl Wessler. Issues #3-16 all contain a typical EC horror tale as well, hosted by the Old Witch. These were identical to her tales in *The Haunt of Fear*, published simultaneously with *CSS*. Seeing the popularity of his horror comics, perhaps Gaines wanted a conventional EC horror tale in *CSS* to help insure healthy sales. He and Feldstein frequently adapted Ray Bradbury's stories in their science fiction and horror lines. A few Bradbury suspense tales also show up in *Crime SuspenStories*, notably "The Screaming Woman" in issue #15.

It is obvious to any cinema buff that Feldstein and Craig were trying for a film noir atmosphere in *CSS*. From the mid 1940s through the 1950s, film noir was a bleak, existential school of film-making that examined crime, murder, betrayal, and what would then have been called "life in the raw." While EC crime tales played upon plot elements and visual motifs of film noir, those movies were in turn influenced by novels and short stories of the 1930s and 1940s, most notably by authors Raymond Chandler and James M. Cain.

Cain in particular is by far the biggest *CSS* influence; his stories usually deal with one spouse trying to murder the other out of hatred, never get money, or to clear the path for another lover. Craig and Feldstein used these elements again and again. One of the most famous film noir movies is *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. A 1946 release, it was directed by Tay Garnett directly from the Cain novel by the same name. A comic fan watching the movie today would see an EC Crime SuspenStory come to life. The ultimate film noir of all time is *Double Indemnity*, a 1944 release directed by Billy Wilder and starring Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray. Wilder used visual techniques that clearly influenced Johnny Craig as he created some of his *CSS* classics.

Craig's *Crime SuspenStories* plots revolve around moral decay, deception, and especially paranoia. In his stories, the protagonist is always his own worst enemy. Dripping with flop sweat, the husband, wife, or paramour comes up with a devilishly clever plan to bump off the problem spouse. However, one small detail, an unforeseen development, or simple fate always intervenes to derail the cleverest plot. In one of EC's patented twist endings, the schemer ends up trapped in their own

Continued on facing page

Canadian MADness

1947 seemed to offer a reprieve of sorts, but this time, while the comics themselves were banned, the printing mats were not.

Most of the surviving Canadian publishers thought it more expedient to rent those mats and reprint American comics here rather than nurture our homegrown talent. This move essentially tolled the death knell of original Canadian comic books until a resurgence at the end of the American Silver Age.

When Superior Publishers Limited of Toronto reprinted *Zor the Mighty Comics* #2 as *Red Seal Comics* #19, by arrangement with American Publisher Harry 'A' Chesler, the practice which would dominate Canadian comics publishing for the next decade was established. When Superior dropped out of the comic business in early 1956, the book was closed on Canada's Atomic Age of Comics only months before the American Silver Age began with the arrival of the Flash in *Showcase* #4.

Which again brings me back to *MAD* #1.

A short while ago that elusive Canadian edition showed up on consignment sale at Carry-On Comics & Books in Waterloo, Ontario. Carry-On owner Andy Brast explained that he generally prices Canadian editions at about one third the price of their American cousins, and still sees buyer resistance to these prices.

Admittedly some Canadian editions suffer from poor color printing and inferior quality paper. The page count and the contents may vary as well.

The Canadian *MAD* #1, however, is a bonus on a number of counts. It is easily distinguishable from its American counterpart by the letters "CDL" (for Colonial Distributors Limited), replacing the October/November date on the original cover. It should be noted as well that the cover stock is somewhat rougher than the original.

The indicia reads "Mad No. 1 Published bi-monthly by Superior Publishers Limited, 2382 Dundas St. W. Toronto 9, Ontario, Canada by arrangement with Educational Comics, Inc., 225 Lafayette Street, New York 12, N.Y. Printed in Canada."

Other than the fact that coupons on the ad pages have been replaced by Canadian coupons for Jolala Sales Ltd. and Nu-Art (coincidentally located at 2382 Dundas St. W. in Toronto) the 32 interior pages include all four stories published in the original, though on somewhat poorer quality newsprint.

As for the price, this VF/VF+ copy of *MAD* #1, taking into account the reduced demand for Canadian reprints and accounting for the rate of foreign exchange, was priced at $1,500 (CDN) or, brace yourselves, only $1,050 (US)!

Despite the fact that no printing date is to be found anywhere in the comic, considering that Superior left the comic publishing business in early 1956, and the fact that Canadian reprints usually hit the stands about three years after their American cousins, in my opinion, we can safely speculate that this baby went on sale sometime between the summer of 1955 (a great time to launch any new comic) and the spring of 1956, a full three years before the British edition.

An interesting historical aside to this discovery arose when the current owner of the book (who kindly arranged to copy the

cover before removing it from sale) mentioned that he had picked it up from a London collector who had inherited the book, along with the rest of a sizable collection, from the very person who first put it on the newsstand back in the '50s!

A few phone calls put me in touch with Erika McCormick of London whose late husband, Fred, left his comics to fellow fan and longtime employee Tim Humphrey. Mrs. McCormick told me Fred took over the cigar store, established by his Uncle Jim in the early '20s at the corner of Richmond and Dundas in London, just before WWII. After retiring from active duty, he ran the store until 1960 when he closed it up to build the hobby shop he had always dreamed of owning.

During his time in retail, Fred loved to sample the newsstand fare, but his greatest enjoyment came from reading the comics. "He always enjoyed comics like a kid," says Mrs. McCormick. "Back then Western News would pick up the returns, but some things, like the comics, were non-returnable. If he had any of those left over, Fred would just keep them." When the McCormick's closed up the cigar shop, he lugged "trunks and cars full" home with him.

A Crime SuspenStories classic, the story "Cut!" from issue #9 (Feb/Mar 1952) showcases Jack Davis' phenomenal skill with black and white line work

While the *Detective Comics* were Fred's first choice, he still stuck by *Batman, Superman* and *Wonder Woman* when the great heroes were in their post-war slump, as well as reading the new-finagled westerns, romance, and such.

And sometime back in the '50s, he picked up a copy of a new humor comic which kind of tickled his fancy. Tim Humphrey tells me Fred also held onto *MAD* #s 2-5 as well. I guess they were all keepers. And the rest, as they say, is funnybook history.

Somehow, I can't help thinking that Fred might be tickled by all this fuss, too.

web, usually to die a horrible death. EC is famous for these "snap" endings in their horror stories, but they are just as prevalent, and often even cleverer, in *CSS*. Feldstein's crime plots were quite similar.

Extremely effective film noir techniques can be found in "The Execution" in *CSS* #12. In this surreal nightmare, a case of mistaken identity leads an innocent man to the electric chair. The tension builds palpably as Craig shows us the preparations for his execution, with the one man capable of proving the prisoner's innocence only a few feet away, blissfully ignorant of the problem. Another acknowledged film noir masterpiece is *D.O.A.* This 1950 film stars Edmond O'Brien as a man dying of a slow-acting poison who has time to solve his own murder. A variation on this theme turns up in "This'll Kill You" in *CSS* #23. Beautifully illustrated by Reed Crandall from an Otto Binder script, it depicts an April Fool's Day joke gone horribly awry. This is one of the many *Crime SuspenStories* tales adapted on HBO's *Tales From the Crypt* television series. That same issue has what has to be one of EC's most bizarre plots (and that is certainly saying something). In "Standing Room Only," a transvestite murders his sister and her wealthy husband only to be found out when he/she is seen walking into the men's rather than the ladies' room!

Many *CBM* readers know of Dr. Fredric Wertham's crusade against comic books, which led to the U.S. Senate hearings and an intense anti-comics backlash. Wertham's book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, featured the infamous hanging cover from *CSS* #20 among its illustrations. Ironically, the one comic that gave Bill Gaines the most trouble while before the Senate subcommittee was not his horror comics but *Crime SuspenStories* #22. That Craig cover shows a man holding a bloody axe in one hand and his wife's severed head in the other, while her decapitated body lies nearby. This issue was held aloft by Senators, who grilled Gaines about how in the world he could publish such ghoulish material for children. This author has the good fortune to have had an ongoing written correspondence with Mr. Craig for the past several years. To this day, he has ambivalent feelings about this cover.

Much more positive are Craig's feelings about his story "Sewer" in *CSS* #5. In this tale of murder gone wrong, Craig stated he feels he came very close to hitting the mark of exactly how he pictured the tale in his mind. Noirish lighting effects, rain-slicked streets, and overflowing sewer grates highlight the visuals. Cinematic touches abound in many *CSS* tales, including an ingenious "time stands still" effect on page six of "Backlash" in issue #4. Yet another film noir stereotype is the evil femme fatale. Perhaps Graham Ingels should have been used more often in this title, given his work in "Heads Up," also found in issue #4. The tale's wanton and wicked Dora, while voluptuous, has an overripe and unwholesome quality perfect for film noir. The noir mainstay of bizarrely-lit extreme facial closeups is shown to good effect by Jack Kamen in "Medicine" in *CSS* #9. Whether cinematically influenced or not, this title featured some of EC's best art. Al Williamson and Frank Frazetta collaborated to great effect in the story "Fired!" in *CSS* #17.

Crime SuspenStories' final issue was #27, on the stands in late 1954. The same backlash that decimated EC's horror comics killed off their crime title as well. However, it certainly went out with a bang and not a whimper... artistically speaking. That issue's "Just Her Speed" drawn by Bernie Krigstein, uses his famed multi-panel technique to perfection. The stories setting is a lonely roadside diner, similar to the one used to great effect in the film noir classic *Gun Crazy*. That 1950 release was an adaptation of a *Saturday Evening Post* short story. These must have been just the type of films and prose that influenced Gaines and Feldstein, leading them to the creation of their oft-forgotten EC crime treasure.

Bill Gaines' EC Time Vault is Opened

By Bob Overstreet (Originally published in *CBM* #82, April/May 1991)

It was a cold rainy day in August. The mist settled in among the Manhattan skyscrapers creating a spooky EC setting as Russ Cochran and Bob Overstreet walked over to Gaines' apartment from their hotel. It seemed like only yesterday when Russ called Bob to tell him that Bill Gaines had decided to sell his EC collection. Russ will be handling the sale and Bob was needed to verify the collection and to arrange the copies of each issue by grade. We both knew that he had put away 12 copies of every EC 35-40 years ago and sealed them away in boxes. Now the time had come to open these packages.

Thoughts were rushing through our heads about the significance of this day. We had many questions to be answered. We wondered what the condition would be like, how white the pages would be, if any issues would be missing and if something new would be discovered. We finally arrived at Gaines' apartment building at 10:15 a.m. After clearing security, we arrived at his doorstep. Bill and his wife Annie cheerfully invited us in. Their apartment was like a curio shop, filled with mementos, souvenirs and Statues of Liberty which they had collected for many years. Over to the right were bookshelves filled with bound ECs and *MAD*s. But what really caught our eyes was a genuine shrunken head sitting on the shelf (see *Haunt* #8 cover). After gasping and choking for a second, we settled down around a large dining room table where the work would be performed.

In the closet were six large cardboard boxes which contained the ECs. The comics were wrapped in brown paper by issue number and sealed in the boxes.

Before the comic books were handled, Russ and Bob put on white cotton film editor's gloves. The first box was opened and the first package of comics was set on the table. We began with *Vault* #40 and worked backwards to *War Against Crime* #10. Russ cut open each package, counted the issues and handed them to Overstreet for arrangement by grade. Annie placed the ID labels on Mylar bags while Bill supervised. After each stack was graded by Overstreet, Russ placed them in Mylar sleeves. At this point the copies were divided into two groups, one to be sold and one to be retained by Bill. Depending on shortages, Bill wanted to keep up to four copies for his personal use.

It soon became apparent, after going through a few packages, that we were seeing something out of the ordinary. The books were dazzling. They were essentially in brand new condition with full cover gloss and extra white pages. The cover colors were brilliant with only a few exceptions. All of the noticeable defects either occurred during printing or trimming or by the way they were wrapped. Some corners were bumped and some issues were wrinkled.

We were disappointed to find no annuals or pre-Trend comics except for *War Against Crime* #10 and 11, and *Crime Patrol* #15 and 16. But we were surprised to find most all of the different variations of M.C. Gaines's books, *Picture Stories From The Bible, Science, American History* and *World History*. Some of these books carried the All-American seal, some the DC seal and others had the familiar EC seal.

After opening a few packages and seeing the pristine condition of the books we just had to check out their smell. The white paper and inks were still so fresh, that opening the books and smelling the inside swept us back to 1950. It was a smell we all remember. Those of us who can recognize a Church (Mile High) comic by its smell would have trouble distinguishing between it and the Gaines collection smell. It also soon became obvious that we were looking at probably the best surviving sets of EC comics.

As a comparison, many of the Harvey file copies had brown edges due to the way they were stored. Some of the Dell file copies also had minor browning on the edges. Since the Gaines collection was never read and was wrapped air tight, the only comparable collection would be the Church collection. In the Dell and Harvey file copies, there were issues missing in the runs, and in some cases there were probably as many as 100 copies of each issue.

Bill had remembered that there were 12 copies in each package, but we found that many had been opened, probably before Gaines moved to his present apartment in 1961. We found that most issues did have 12 copies, but there were many packages that contained 9, 10 and 11 copies, a few with only 7 copies and one issue with only one copy (*Vault #12*).

The work was tedious, the days were long, but filled with memories that we shall never forget. As we looked at these books, we traded stories about our memories of seeing each cover for the first time and stories of how we tracked down that particular issue for our collections. Each day we played Christmas music and sang Christmas carols as we continued processing the mountain of unopened packages. At each day's end we returned to our hotel immersed in EC dust, Christmas spirit and childhood memories.

After spending a few days going through these beautiful books, Russ and Bob agreed that it was an experience that any EC fan would have enjoyed—the historic unveiling of the Gaines EC collection. It was like opening 300 little time capsules that hadn't seen the light of day for 35-40 years! Being small town collectors, we both felt privileged and honored to be present at such an historic occasion. We hope that these notes will in some way make it possible for all other collectors and fans to have been there also.

On Friday, August 11th we processed *Vault, Crypt, Haunt, Crime* and *Shock*. On Saturday, August 12th we did *Weird Science, Weird Fantasy, Weird Science-Fantasy, Incredible Science Fiction, all New Direction, MAD* and *Panic*. On Sunday we were joined by Sylvia Cochran and Angie Meyer and did *Two-Fisted, Frontline, 3-Ds* and all *Picture Stories*. The actual sets of books were put together Sunday afternoon which finished the project.

We learned that *Impact* #1 was originally printed by Charlton Press. The printing quality was poor, so Gaines had the entire print run destroyed, saving only one copy. It was then printed again and distributed to the stands.

Overstreet wound up this trip by taking Jerry Robinson out to dinner Monday night to the Gotham Bar & Grill while Cochran and company went to a Broadway play.

GAINES FILE COPY

Gaines

Continued from page 42

"First there was three comic magazine associations. The first one was before my time and the second started while I was publishing the horror books. I was able to publish the horror books with it although they censored and changed quite a bit of things which you wouldn't be aware of because you didn't see the originals.

"Then they kind of went out of business. That was the one that used to have a bar and star symbol. Then after the Senate Sub-Committee hearings on juvenile delinquency, it was then I determined to drop all of my crime and horror comics. However, they still continued to make a nice profit right through the last issues," Gaines remembered.

"After that, a new association was formed," Gaines recalled—the Comics Code Authority.

"Actually, I was instrumental in starting that association, although I did not have censorship in mind. After having started the ball rolling, it was taken out of my hands by the people who wanted to form what later became the Judge (Charles F.) Murphy office, and Murphy and a group of women were censoring everything," Gaines recounted. With his New Direction titles, dying, Gaines reluctantly joined the Comics Code Authority but withdrew ten months later out of frustration. His picto-fiction, a black and white line was next but it was practically D.O.A.

However, there was still *MAD* and it was about to become the biggest seller in Gaines' career.

In order to keep prized artist and editor Harvey Kurtzman from bolting elsewhere, Gaines turned the *MAD* comic book into a magazine, starting with issue #24. However, the financial problems were still there and Bill and his mother each contributed $50,000 each out of their inheritance to keep *MAD* going.

According to Gaines, Kurtzman was fired after demanding a large percentage of the business. With the urging of others, Gaines hired Al Feldstein back who had been out of work for several months. For the next few years, *MAD* grew by leaps and bounds and out-distanced all its competition.

One of the fields Gaines stayed away from was that of the superhero genre. "I wasn't interested. I didn't have a feel for it. If I didn't have a feel for it, I couldn't publish it," Gaines said.

Gaines passed away on June 3, 1992 at the age of 70. Bill Gaines' widow, Annie, is presently the managing editor of *MAD*. "He was in a wheelchair the last six months of his life," she said. "He couldn't walk very well and he couldn't stand; it hurt his back and his legs. His doctors always performed miracles and I thought they would perform another one but they couldn't.

"He really had a lot of medical problems but he faced them very well. He didn't seem to get depressed like a lot of people might," Mrs. Gaines continued.

Bill and Annie were married for five years but had been together for a little over 20 years. "We started going together in '72 and got married in '87."

When asked what fascinated her most about Bill Gaines in their 20-year relationship, Annie laughed before tackling the question. "I guess first it was 'Wow, the publisher of *MAD* is going to take me to dinner.' And then, I just fell in love with this guy and he fell in love with me. He was just the sweetest and most generous guy."

"We miss him incredibly around here. The feeling changed (after his death) and now that we're run by people who are much more part of the corporate world, we have to abide more by their rules," Mrs. Gaines said.

Mrs. Gaines recounts a corporate meeting which included Steve Ross, the head of Warner, *MAD*'s parent company at the time. Ross suggested to Gaines about putting advertising in *MAD* and what he thought about it. "Bill gave him all the reasons why he couldn't do it. He just didn't want to get involved in the whole advertising world anyway. He finished this thing by saying, 'And if you take ads, I'm leaving the magazine.' Ross then said, 'Next idea.'"

Mrs. Gaines remembered an encounter with *Comic Book Price Guide* author Robert Overstreet and Russ Cochran of Gemstone Publishing concerning Bill's EC file copies. "When they came to our apartment to grade them, we'd open up these packages and they'd each pick them up and smell them. One or the other would say, 'Oh, wow, I remember this. I sat under a tree and it was so hot that day.' They were reveling in the smell: 'That old EC smell.' It was so funny," she laughed.

Longtime associate Nick Meglin and co-editor of *MAD* goes back to the *Panic* days of the mid-fifties when he wrote for the companion magazine. "I helped pay my way through art school by writing for comics," Meglin recalled.

"Al Feldstein knew my comedic work from *Panic*, so that when Kurtzman left, he needed my help because he was not a humorous editor to speak of," Meglin pointed out. "He was not a humor writer by nature. He was terrific with horror and science fiction; that's where he got his reputation," Meglin said, clarifying his previous statement.

Meglin was brought on full-time with *MAD* with issue #30 after Feldstein took over following Kurtzman's departure.

"Once *MAD* magazine started to survive and sales kept going up, Bill, as he got more and more confident, that *MAD* was indeed going to survive, he then started to have fun. I think what was the greatest part of the organization was his recognition of the bullpen of great artists he had at EC. His reputation as a comic book publisher was really due to the talent he was able to attract to *MAD*. By paying more, you'd be getting more, he put together a terrific team," Meglin analyzed.

"Gaines initiated the *MAD* trips with the first one being in 1961. This was unheard of before by any publisher. No publisher treated freelance people with the kind of generosity that Gaines did. Bill liked the people and wanted to have fun with these people on his own. So, he created a very paternal, friend, and social-driven atmosphere with his freelancers. And no other publisher ever came close to doing what he did. That's what it was all about.

"Bill Gaines created fun. He created an atmosphere of fun for the people to work in so that it became more than a job, more than a deadline, more than a pressure and with that came the growth of *MAD*," Meglin concluded.

It's all these aspects of the Gaines legacy... the genius storytelling, the incredible art, the side-splitting humor, the satirical irreverence... and the sheer excellence... that makes so many historians describe 1950-55 as "The EC Age of Comics!"

THE MICHAEL NAIMAN REPORT

Doomed to repeat it!

Summer is heating up and it's the best time of the year for having fun with the hobby! Strong bets in the high grade marketplace (and holding their own in value) still seem to be X-Men #1-#10, #94-#130, Giant Size X-Men #1; any Spider-Man up to #99 (#100 seems to be very soft these days); Thor #126-#150; selected Daredevils (#1 and #7); and Fantastic Four #4 (a difficult high grader to locate).

Bargain hunters might like to look for House of Mystery #156-173 (Robby Reed and Dial H for Hero series). These issues can be had in Near Mint condition for a fraction of the Guide value. A Martian Manhunter backup isn't the end of the world either! The house ads are tantalizing for their coming attractions, and once you get by those horrid little Go-Go checks on some of these 12¢ books from 1967, one can enjoy the entertaining escapist tales inside.

North of the Border: According to Doug Sulipa of Comic World, "We've had a recent surge in demand for long running titles such as Dennis the Menace, Sad Sack, Blondie, and Popeye. Apparently, there are many collectors who want to fill in these long runs with relatively inexpensive, still obtainable material. Comic book enthusiasts are also looking for the paperback compilations of newspaper strip titles such as Tumbleweeds and the hugely popular Peanuts. The MAD paperbacks have also been moving briskly. Most often looked for are those rare ones that only had a single printing. Top of that list in demand would be Sergio Aragones' MAD Marginals. People who have read all of the Barks stories are now discovering those tales written and drawn by Don Rosa. The Atlas/Seaboard line is still steady but collectors should remember that Atlas/Seaboard #1s of continuing series are not rare... it's those pesky *last* issues that no one can find. Also, the Atlas/Seaboard one-shots are in high demand, along with #2 issues of the magazine titles."

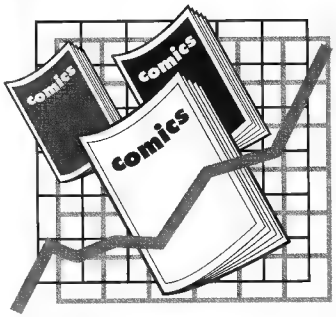
Ducks on the Wing: The out-of-print ten volume 30 issue set of the Carl Barks Library has always been a great source of information and data for Barks fans. The typical three book volume sells for between $125-$175 per set on the open market. The near impossible to find Volume #5 (Uncle Scrooge #44-71) has rocketed in value. There have been reported sales of $365, $660, and even $1,000! Other high grade bargains still to be looked for in Duckdom... Uncle Scrooge #6 and #24; Dell Giant #55. Anyone (except for famed square bound collector Bill Howard) ever see/own a high grade 30¢ (Canadian?) copy of Uncle Scrooge goes to Disneyland? Anyone ever found the elusive NM copy of Peter Pan Treasure Chest? I've never seen one and I doubt if one exists better than VF.

Soft as Duck Down: Four Color #9 "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold" which is neither rare nor hard to find, can be had in Fine or less condition at extremely reasonable rates... same goes for the Whitman #978 1935 edition of the Donald Duck linen book.

Under the "I've Never Seen It Does It Really Exist Category"... the 1936 (nn) edition of Donald Duck by Whitman/Grosset & Dunlop containing 36 pages plus hard cover and dust jacket... never seen them together in high grade!

In reporting the trends in the marketplace, one should look at the short term and long term events that affect the hobby. Ed Jaster of Jaster Collectibles put it succinctly when he called the outrageous and unbelievable prices realized on some recent comic book sales as "highlight films" ...an isolated incident that causes everyone's head to rotate, à la the Exorcist.

The other perspective to consider is the long term trend. The old saying that goes "Those who *(Continued on page 84)*



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After the success of our latest catalogue sale, All Star Auctions is looking forward to the San Diego Comic-con in July and the next Simul-con, an Internet/live auction to be held at the show. The sale already includes key Marvel covers and splashes along with the usual array of high quality Golden and Silver Age books. The original art market is extremely strong with many new people coming over from the comic book area. There's nothing like owning a one-of-a-kind piece of comic history!

All New #7 (Mile High) VF+ $1,650; All Top #14 (Ohio) VF/VF- $1,045; All Winners #2 VG $550; Astonishing #24 (Big Apple) FN- $66; Blonde Phantom #16 VF $605; Daredevil (GA) #2 VG $330; Detective #34 VG $715; Fantastic Four #1 FN+ $1,980; Flash #31 (Big Apple) VG $88; Four Color #3 (Alley Oop) VF/VF- $396; Green Hornet #28 (Big Apple) VF/VF- $330

Marvel Mystery #45 (Big Apple) FN-/FN $330; National #26 (San Francisco) VF+/NM- $1,540; Pep #1 VG $924; Shield Wizard #1 VG+ $539; Smash #1 VG $385; Superman #3 FN- $1,545; Weird Mysteries #1 (Bethlenem) FN/VF $825; Whiz #6 FN/VF- $693, World's Finest #50 FN $176.

Art: Barks pencil Prelim to cover of Uncle Scrooge #43 $2,200; Ditko Hawk & Dove #1 Pg 18 $1,210; Kubert Our Army at War #133 Splash page $1,375; N. Adams Action #374 cover $5,775; McKay Little Nemo 7/18/1909 $19,800; Kelly Pogo 11/30/48 $1,650; Taliaferro Mickey Mouse Sunday 1/15/58 $880, 12/8/57 $880; Schulz Peanuts daily 10/27/87 $3,025, Sunday

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#12 VG- $656 95%
#83 GD $75 1.23X
#223 VG- $44 72%
#252 VG- $175 74%

Adventure
#69 VF+ $827 96%
#104 VG- $133 70%

All American
#22 VF- $610 44%
#24 VG $285 48%
#37 VF $360 57%

All Star
#7 VG- $577 93%
#11 VG $330 57%
#12 VF $810 56%

Amazing Spider-Man
#1 VG $1,200 86%
#5 VF $546 60%
#22 VF+ $133 89%
#66 NM $41 82%

Archie
#22 FN $36 30%
#27 FN $51 42%

Avengers
#26 NM $30 75%
#100 FN $26 1.40X

Batman
#8 VG $500 75%
#121 FN $93 78%
#138 FN $47 92%

Comic Cavalcade
#1 VG $560 35%
#2 VG $210 47%
#4 VG+ $168 61%

Comics on Parade
#54 VF+ $55 89%

Crime Patrol
#9 VF- $100 38%

Crime SuspenStories
#25 FN+ $47 1.33X
#23 GD $15 85%
#9 GD $22 79%

Crypt of Terror
#19 FN- $199 49%

Doctor Strange
#180 NM $46 1.64X

Fantastic Four
#44 NM- $56 86%
#53 NM- $76 84%
#55 VF $75 1.36X
#57 NM $86 1.56X%
#59 NM $50 91%

Flash
#60 VG- $66 41%
#105 FN- $770 83%

Four Color
#98 VG $116 1.97X%

Green Lantern
#76 VF+ $126 1.13X%

Harvey Comic Hits
#51 (Phantom) VF-$53 37%

Haunt of Fear
#7 VF $208 Guide
#4 VG $88 70%
#16 VF- $62 40%
#6 VG $66 94%
#23 FN $34 68%
#10 VG $22 31%

Haunted Love
#1 VF $35 1.34X%

Iron Man
#3 NM- $41 68%

Journey Into Mystery
#107 FN+ $19 79%
#119 FN+ $17 81%

Jimmy Olsen
#1 GD $225 70%

Jimmy Wakely
#7 VF+ $218 86%

JLA
#73 VF $38 2%
#78 VF $27 1.96X

Judy Canova
#23(#1) VF $57 59%

Katy Keene
#26 VG+ $46 1.15X

Lois Lane
#20 FN $20 44%
#34 VG $16 1.29X
#57 VF $40 1.81X

Lone Ranger
#6 NM $95 51%
#11 FN $39 1.26X
#17 FN+ $35 1.13X

Marvel Tales
#14 NM $10 63%

Millie the Model
#148 VF $10 66%
#160 VF+ $10 66%

More Fun
#102 FN+ $345 94%
#106 GD $105 1.35X

Mystic (1st series)
#2 VG $706 96%
#3 VG- $356 64%

New Gods
#1 NM $41 75%

NoMan
#1 VF+ $35 83%

Our Army at War
#6 FN+ $81 75%

Pat Boone
#5 FN+ $70 65%

Plastic Man
#1 VF $1,225 57%

Police
#19 VG $100 55%

Rip Hunter
#1 GD $25 61%

Scribbly
#2 VF $100 30%
#4 FN $51 35%

Shock SuspenStories
#5 GD $32 1.19X
#11 GD $10 45%
#13 GD $28 87%
#17 VG+ $34 1%

Showcase
#3 VG+ $122 89%
#32 FN $60 59%
#34 FN $225 78%

Silver Surfer
#13 NM $35 70%

Space Mouse
#1 FN $16 59%

Stories By Famous Authors
#1 VG+ $51 74%
#2 VG+ $51 74%
#3 FN $76 95%
#4 FN $61 88%
#5 VG+ $51 1.11

Strange Adventures
#17 GD $25 57%

Strange Tales
#51 VF- $87 79%
#95 VF- $96 1.05X
#148 NM $35 70%

Superman
#38 VG $135 70%
#125 GD $20 87%
#137 VG $23 71%
#138 FN $33 59%

Swamp Thing
#3 NM $13 59%

Tales From The Crypt
#21(#2) GD $61 73%
#42 VG $61 90%
#35 FN $55 54%
#35 VF $128 65%

Thor
#132 VF $29 Guide
#133 VF+ $34 1.15X
#157 VF $19 Guide
#160 VF $30 1.54X

Tom-Tom
#1 VF $53 1.17X

Two Fisted Tales
#30 FN $36 84%
#37 GD- $12 Guide
#40 VG $18 82%
#40 GD+ $16 1.45X

Valor
#2 GD $15 73%
#2 GD $13 63%

Weird Fantasy
#10 VG $36 53%
#21 GD $41 1.03X
#22 VG $24 63%
#27 GD $15 55%
#29 VG $90 95%

Whiz
#2 VG+ $810 96%

Wonder Woman
#80 VG $158 3.71X
#89 FN $119 1.86X
#117 FN $38 1.19X
#178 NM- $66 2.06X

World's Finest
#226 NM $21 1.24X

X-Men
#8 VF+ $174 89%
#14 NM $308 1.26X
#15 NM- $246 Guide
#37 FN $13 62%
#104 NM $31 8900%?
#105 NM $51 1.46X
#106 NM $51 1.46X
#110 NM $25 71%
#130 NM $20 71%

11/25/62 $6,050; Romita Sr. Amazing Spider-Man daily 11/17/77 & 5/26/77 $2,420 each.

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Quasar Comics and Collectibles latest auction (#23) concluded on Saturday, May 13, 2000. Overall, participation and prices realized were very good. Golden Age, '50s, and assorted puolishers of the 1960s and 1970s were Strong. Big Little Books were very strong as were pulp magazines, Silver Age DC and Marvel, and 1970s were mixed with many items going very cheap and some bringing strong prices for a reasonable average.

Romance and Teen comics were strong and 1980s and 1990s comics, with few exceptions, were very weak, with prices generally being in the "blow-out" range. With the exception of this newer material, the bottom line seems to be: Collectors are active and comics will sell as long as you don't insist on a high percentage of Guide.

One interesting note: Don't focus solely on the Internet! Many collectors and dealers do not

use the Internet. If you focus only on reaching the collecting community via the Internet, you will miss many collectors and frequently better prices than the "Internet jaded" audience.

The following are some of the highlights of the sale from some of the comic book sections of the auction.

Golden Age to 1970s, Assorted Publishers: 3-D Sheena Jungle Queen FR/GD $50; Adventures into Darkness #8 (Feb 53) Glossy GD- $25; All-true All-Picture Police Cases #1 VG/FN $60; Apache #1 (1951) Flat clean VG+ $20; Atom-Age Combat #3 (Mar 59) Nice VG/FN- $35; Attack #54 VG+ $16; Baby Huey, the Baby Giant #1 (Sep 56) GD $38; Blonde Phantom #17 GD- $63.

Canteen Kate #3 FR $55; Captain 3-D #1 VG/FN $11; Capt. Marvel Adv. #47 VG- $56; #48 VG $40; Capt. Video #5 GD/VG $45; Clyde Beatty #1 FR/GD $10; Comics on Parade #10 Solid VG+ $70; Crime does not Pay #90 GD 15; #95 GD- $8; #109(Apr 52) Solid FR/GD $8; #115 FN- $9; Crime Must Lose #4 (#1) Glossy VG/FN $26; Crime SuspenStories #7 VG+ $15, #8 GD $15, #13 GD+ $15; Crimes By Women #6 FR/GD $63.22.

Destination Moon GD $30; Dick Tracy #7 VG $32, #8 VG $37, #15 VG $20; Four Color #9 (Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold) VG/FN $1,500; Don Fortune Magazine #6 Nice VG+ $16; Forbidden Worlds #3 FR $48; Frankenstein #18 PR $10; #19 VG+ $46; Haunt of Fear #7 GD- $20; #19 GD+ $30; Herbie the Fat Fury #10 FN/VF $30; Incredible Science Fiction #30 Apparent VG+ $15; Indian Warriors #7 (#1) GD/VG $9; Intrigue #1 VG $40; Jeff Jordan U.S. Agent #1 (1947) VG $20; Jo-Jo Congo King #22 GD+ $55; Jumbo #90 FR $10; Jungle #34 VG+ $40, #122 GD $11, #133 VG/FN $21; Katy Keene 3-D #1 VG+ no glasses $67; MAD #1 CGC FN-, my grade VG+ $1211; Master #9 FR+ $50; Mystic #7 GD $26.

Nightmare #13 (Aug 54) FR/GD $20; Nuts #3 GD/VG $25; Out of this World #12 VG $15; Peacemaker V3#4 (1967) Glossy VF $12; Pep #15 PR $22; Phantom Lady #21 FR/GD $90; Playful Little Audrey #1 VG/FN $25; Rocky Lane Western #79 VG $18; Shock SuspenStories #2 GD $33, #4 GD $20, #7 GD $25, #8 GD/VG $30, #10 GD-$15, #11 FR/GD $12.

Startling Terror Tales #11 VG+ $263, #13 GD/VG $40, #14 GD $26, #14 GD/VG $30, Strange #2 FR+ $9; Strange Mysteries #19 Glossy VG- $21; Super-Mystery Comics V5#6 VG+ $37; Tales from the Crypt #24 VG- $150, #28 FR $22, #29 GD $25; Tarzan #67 NM $20; Terrors of the Jungle #18 VG $45; Texan, The #15 GD $10; Thing #4 VG $55; This Mag is Haunted #2 VG- $33; 3-D Classics #1 FR/GD $40; True 3-D #1 FN/VF (no glasses) $17.

Vault of Horror #32 GD- $20, #33 GD $22; Weird Fantasy #9 GD/VG $30; Weird Horrors #3 GD $32; World of Fantasy #17 FN $29; Zago Jungle Princess #3 GD $46.

Spirit Sections: 6/2/40 (#1) PR $157, 6/16/40 (#3) FR/GD $30, 8/4/40 (#10) FN/VF $50, 8/18/40 FN $40, 10/20/40 VG $25, 11/3/40 VG $25, 11/3/40 VF $121, 11/10/40 FN $81, 11/10/40 VG $25, 1/26/41 FR $15, 2/2/41 FN/VF $35, 2/16/41 VG $25, 4/13/41 VG $25, 4/27/41 VG/FN $25, 8/10/41 VG $30, 12/7/41 FN- $30, 2/1/42 FN $35, 2/22/42 VG $25, 5/31/42 NM $42, 5/31/42 VG $6, 10/18/42 FN $25, 11/22/42 VF+ $25.

DC Comics: Action #23 CGC VG- my grade GD- $850, #72 FR $40, #246 VG+ $45; Adventure #142 PR $33, #293 VG $15, #300 VG+ $45; All American Men of War #11 VG/FN $35; Atom #1 VG/FN $101, #2 VG+ $32, #7 VG+ $31; Batman #26 VG/FN $231, #50 AppVG+ $101, #67 VG/FN $97, #72 FR $50, #75 VG/FN $85, #77 VG/FN $95, #87 FN- $105, #97 VF+ $315, #132 VG+ $12, #138 FN+ $40, #139 VG- $17, #151 FN $25, #171 VG $67, #200 NM- $75, #217 VF $11, #218 VF $12, #259 VF/NM $18; Batman Annual #1 GD $20; Beware the Creeper #1 FN+ $15; Brave & Bold #18 GD+ $21, #34 VG+ $226, #35 VG $30, #42 VG/FN $30, #43 VG/FN $30, #44 VG $25.

Detective #115 FR/GD $60, #313 FN $18, #323 FN/VF $21; Flash #72 VG/FN $131, #110 VG- $95, #123 GD/VG $93, #125 VG+ $10, #137 GD $17; Flash Annual #1 FN $80; Flippity & Flop #15 VG+ $10; G.I. Combat #44 (#1) GD/VG $75; Gang Busters #50 FN- $11; Green Lantern #1 GD/VG $191, #85 FN/VF $10; Hawkman #1 FN/VF $140, #2 FN $30, House of Mystery #1 GD- $150, #21 VG/FN $26; House of Secrets #12 GD- $15, #92 FN/VF $80; Mister Miracle #1 VF+ $15; My Greatest Adv. #13 FR+ $12; Mys in Space #54 GD/VG $20, #83 FN $25, #87 FN+ $41; Our Fighting Forces #1 FR+ $50, #12 GD $15; Secret Origins #1 VG $50; Sensation #50 FR $50, #55 VG/FN $60; Showcase #34 VG $145, #60 FN+ $60; Star Spangled #90 GD $38, #122 GD $25; Strange Adv. #49 GD+ $24, #53 GD/VG $20; Superboy #15 GD/VG $40; Superman #12 PR $52, #23 GD $150, #92 AppVG $25, #117 GD+ $10; Lois Lane #9 FR $10, #15 VG $16; Unexpected #8 VG+ $3; Teen Titans #1 VG+ $23, #2 FN/VF $20, #6 VF $11, #8 VF $11; World's Finest #66 FN+ $175, #115 FN+ $9, #118 FN $22, #156 FN+ $35.

Marvel Comics: Amazing Adult Fantasy #8 GD+ $45; Amazing Spider-Man #5 GD $75, #11 VG $50, #13 FR/GD $17, #15 VG $43, #16 GD/VG $25, #18 VG $51, #28 FN+ $75, #96 VF $38, #97 NM $61, #98 VF $38, #121 FN/VF $29, #122 NM- $100, #122 VG/FN $8, #200 NM $7, Avengers #4 GD+ $100, #6 VG (faded cvr) $25; Amazing Spider-Man Annual #10 NM $15; Captain America #100 FN $35, #109 FN/VF $12, Daredevil #3 GD+ $14, #4 VG- $21, #7 VG+ $25, #10 FN+ $26, #11 FN+ $6; Doc Savage #1 VF/NM $5.

Fantastic Four #110 Undisclosed Variant Cover FN- $31. (Overstreet says the regular edition has green faces and the variant has flesh faces and a green Thing. This one has flesh faces and a normal Thing!)

Fantastic Four #9 FR $26, #25 VF/NM $275, #36 FN- $18, #37 FN+ $19, #38 VF-$27, #48 VG+ $60, #49 VG $25, #50 VG+ $25, #100 FN+ $13; Fantasy Masterpieces #1 FN/VF $10; Hulk #4 PR/FR $30, #340 NM $7; Iron Man #1 VG+ $40; Iron Man & Sub-Mariner #1 VG+ $10; Journey into Mystery #89 AppVG $18, #97 VG/FN $20; Journey into Unknown Worlds #37 (#2) FR/GD $55, #5 FR/GD $30; Marvel Super Special #1 VG $6; Marvel Feature #1 FN+ $25; Marvel Spotlight #5 VF $26; Marvel Super Action (featuring The Punisher) #1 VG $4.

Night Nurse #1 FN/VF $21, #1-4 Complete set (#1 VG+, #2 VG, #3 FN+, #4 VG) $80; Silver Surfer #1 VG $45, #4 FN $87; Spectacular Spider-Man #1 NM $15; Star Wars #107 FN+ $15; Strange Tales #2 FR $47.25, #107 VG+ $26, #119 GD/VG $9; Tales of Suspense #41 VG+ $65, #42 VG/FN $40, #43 VG/FN $40, #46 VG $25, #47 VG $30, #48 GD $10; Tales to Astonish #58 VF- $25; What If #31 NM $14; X-Men #3 AppVG $55, #3 GD+ $45, #5 FR+ $20, #7 GD+ $31, #10 FN $54, #59 VF $21; Giant Size X-Men #1 VG+ $110.

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I think any doubt as to the staying power of slabbed comics has been laid to rest. Greg Manning's May auc- *(Continued on page 82)*

Romance titles are in huge demand!

In an era of hype, shill bidding, and unreliable price guides, collectors must make an all out effort to be "in tune" with the marketplace. Knowing the latest trends, break-out issues, and false and misleading hype is quite difficult, but essential in order to feel confident when making a purchase. Sure, you love the book, but is 2x Guide a deal or not? What if the book is at half of Guide?

What's the market telling you now? As market transparency increases, so does the collector's confidence and that can only be good for the hobby.

Pulps: The transition of comic collectors into pulps continues at a rapid pace. Certainly the doubling, and tripling of prices realized in the last two years have quieted a few, but most pulps are still viewed as scarce, fascinating, and a bargain when compared to comics.

Pulps Sales: Dime Mystery 7/38 FN $145; Horror 6/39 VF $420; Shadow 9/38 VF $550; Spider 4/36 GD $290; Weird Tales 4/35 GD $220.

Golden Age: The hot demand for very low grade and very high grade Timely continues with Captain America leading the way. Low grade DC is showing a little life again, but tough to reach Guide values for mid grade books. Collectors are showing a renewed interest in the Chesler, Fox, and Quality lines after giving them a rest for the past few years. Odd-ball issues and small publishers are still under-valued in the Guide and savvy collectors are beginning to jump on that bandwagon.

Golden Age Sales: All American #26 FN $675; Archie #3 FR $80; Batman #20 GD $245; Bulletman #1 VG $550; Four Color #18 (Little Orphan Annie) GD $65, #34 (Dick Tracy) VG/FN $132; Human Torch #17 VF+ $1,150; Large Feature Comic #3 GD $380; Laugh #20 VG $185; Marvel Mystery #33 GD $205; Sub-Mariner #2 GD $670.

Atomic Age: As collectors continue to search for those extremely elusive books, they look under the rocks to find a few new undiscovered gems. Demand for the Schomburg Wonder issues continues to climb as well as intense interest for the Fox Jungle and Good Girl themed books. Across the board, the Romance titles are in huge demand... with many reporting that Michelle Nolan's excellent exploration of obscure and little-known Romance titles in her regular CBM column is part of the reason. The last few Flash issues are back on many lists, while the Atlas Science Fiction and pre-hero stuff is also showing a growing demand.

Atomic Age Sales: Four Color #782 (Duck Album) VF $19.50; Ghost #3 FN $125; Great Action #9 VG $30; House of Secrets 2 GD $75; Joe Yank #5 FN $45; JoJo #14 VF $245; Master #133 VF $140; Mister Mystery #8 GD $95; Mr. DA #3 VG $70; My Love Story #5 FN $48; Shock SuspenStories #13 GD $65.

Silver Age: Even the most jaded market-watcher had to be truly amazed at the prices realized at the Greg Manning auction last month. 4, 6, 7, 9 times Guide? They would have purchased more if there was more to be had. While the mainstream titles continue to be in huge demand for high grade issues, even the more off-beat titles in high grade are selling for multiples of Guide. This column predicted this a full year and a half ago, and now here it is. WonderCon revealed the lack of truly high demand/high grade books to be obtained, and collectors are pouncing on that perceived lack of supply!

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #1 AppFN $1,100; Daredevil #7 FN $78; Journey into Mystery #1 GD $380; Little Lotta Foodland #1 FN $48; Lone Ranger #145 VF $80; Many Love of Dobie Gillis #1 FN $105; Showcase #22 FR $275, #51 NM $160; Strange Tales #135 VF $95; Sub-Mariner #1 NM+ $145; Tales of Suspense #52 VF+ $175.

Bronze Age: Talk about a diverse genre! Collectors are literally devouring Marvel westerns, DC Romance, and Atlas books. They are also actually looking to complete entire runs of a title once again... and in high grade! Neal Adams books clearly lead the way, even breathing life into World's Finest and Challengers of the Unknown. The DC Dollar comics (round-bound format books) are being scooped up by future-thinking collectors, and believe it or not, major forays are even being made into early to mid '80s small print run, black and white press titles. Hot at one time, this stuff was tossed into the bargain bins and the waste baskets for more than a decade... fermenting into VGs. Massive quantities of this stuff isn't even listed in the price guides anymore... and that could be the sure sign of a trend taking off!

Bronze Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #135 NM $55; Batman #400 VF $100, #189 NM- $70; Combat Kelly #1 NM $26; Conan #1 VF/NM $90; Green Lantern #76 FN $120; House of Secrets #92 FN $185; Marvel Team Up #2 NM+ $110; Monster of Frankenstein #1 VF/NM $24; Sgt. Rock #302 VF+ $22; Superfriends #1 NM- $65; Tomb of Dracula #2 NM $38; Unknown Soldier #205 NM $28; Vicki #1 GD $19; Weird Wonder Tales #2 NM $19.

What goes into the decision of how much we pay for a book? Too many factors to list here, but at some point we have to feel "good" about the decision to purchase. What ultimately brings us to that point is knowledge! Or, at least enough knowledge to feel good about the purchase. So, the next time you step up for a big book, do you feel you have enough knowledge? Are you really sure? Savvy buyers do their marketplace homework first!

MARKET REPORTS

(Continued from page 80)

tion, which featured mostly slabbed, high grade pedigreed comics set many new records, as well as possibly re-establishing the standards upon which people buy investment material. Some of us knew this was coming whether we liked it or not, but the secret is out. And as far as high grade material goes—hope you bought up enough prior to May, because the stuff's value skyrocketed overnight.

The question I have is, too much too fast? Will these huge price hikes in such a short span of time hurt the industry? Time will tell. I certainly think that the days of quibbling over 1.2 Guide and such for high grade is over. The flood of incoming investors will negate any need to discount those books.

This will likely make many dyed-in-the-wool collectors angry, but I think the VF categories (and down) will become a much more viable market. If I'm trying to put a nice run together and don't want to pay 3x Guide for a NM 9.4, I'll settle for a VF 8.0 for Guide any day of the week. Let's face it; the difference between the two is splitting hairs. Leave the NMs to the investing aspect of collecting!

Which brings me to an interesting aside. Someone made a very good point to me the other day concerning pedigrees. Now that a grading standard is being implemented and accepted in this industry (far from flawless, but very progressive), we'll finally get to see what all of these pedigrees grade out at. And here's a startling prediction: some very famous ones may end up yielding few 9.0 or better grades. What does this mean? Well, it means that the term "pedigree" may not hold as much weight as it once did.

Prior to CGC these collections were mentioned only in general terms, with assumptions being the rule of thumb. Especially for the early ones that have since been dispersed all over the place. Who knows what the true average grade of Larsons are? I do know that foxing, writing, and the occasional water stain is common on them... all defects for which CGC downgrades. CGC 9.0-10.0s may in fact become a pedigree... maybe THE pedigree, for which a set multiple of Guide will be paid. One exception, though: the Mile Highs will live up to their name, and they will still command many multiples of Guide. And that multiple may be increasing significantly in the coming months.

On a different note, we just finished the Big Easy Con here in New Orleans, and it was a blast! There wasn't a large number of dealers with deep inventory of Gold and Silver, but that just made it more profitable for the ones who had it. And we all had fun. Hey, that's what it's all about, right? And what better a city to do it in?

Golden Age Sales: Action #23 GD $500, #44 VG (2 centerfolds out) $105; Detective #35 appVF $1,600; Exciting #12 GD $68; Flash #1 appFN $5,000 cash/trade; Gangbusters #4 FN $50; Headline #43 VF- (Mile High) $75; Jesse James #9 FN $25; Justice Traps The Guilty #15 VF $25; Large Feature #17 (Gang Busters) VG+ $150; Marvel #2 AppFN/VF $2,550.

Silver Age Sales: Atom #2 VG/FN $75, #6 VG $20; Batman Annual #1 VG+ $120; Hulk #1 PR $200; Journey Into Mystery #83 GD $207; Showcase #10 FR $100, #45 VG $30.

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In general, the overall market on unrestored Golden Age is as solid as I've seen it in 20 years, especially Timelys and major DC titles. Of course, high grade Silver does well (as usual) as do keys. Good buys are still available on many '70's titles and if you know the dealer, and the books haven't been slabbed yet, one can still buy no bull NM copies of LOTS and LOTS of titles at or below Guide, including Spider-Man, FF and X-Men.

That said, a few thoughts on what is occurring with CGC. As I write this, Mark Wilson has a Hulk 6 (yes #6 not #1) slabbed and graded 9.6 by CGC with an $11,000 reserve and the bidding is almost there!! Over 10x Guide! I can only look at the book on eBay and, I suppose, we'll never again see the pages. Now I respect Mark and have always considered him a good influence in our business. But, this book has tan inner covers and I can see the tanning on the back cover. The book looks stunning for sure but it's got a defect that I've routinely used to knock NM books down to VF/NM for years.

What has happened to the concept of paper quality? It bothers me that paper quality seems so unimportant. When we were all debating slabbing books a few years ago, I assumed people would not support it because paper quality is so important. Apparently, I'm wrong. This particular book's not an isolated instance. Whoever is paying these huge prices for CGC books apparently couldn't care less about the interiors. I'm an open market kind of guy and let the market dictate what it will bear... but I still think this is nuts.

I can testify there are a lot of books that look like the Hulk 6 on the outside but have such poor insides I've graded them VFs. Will these books end up slabbed and graded NM 92 or 94 or 96? I regrettably suspect they will and command huge prices.

There are those of you out there saying, "Keith, you're cutting your nose off to spite your face" and you may be correct. Perhaps I should be dealing in slabbed books (and I am getting some graded as I write this) but I find it hard to accept that these precious collectibles that were made to be READ (not just gazed at) will soon be valued only for their covers. Even if that's what does occur. Perhaps it's good for investment potential, but it destroys what I hold near and dear about comics.

Recent Sales: Avengers 1 VG+ $310; Human Torch #4 (#3) $767; Mystery in Space 72 FN+ $24, #88 FN+ $26.55.

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Well, summer is almost here! That means it's almost time for the San Diego Comic Con and the Sotheby's Auction. It will be interesting to see what happens at this year's comic auction. I recently looked over the catalog and I noticed quite a few CGC graded books as well as some high grade books. If the results of Sotheby's auction are anything like the few other recent auctions graded books should do rather well. Included in the auction are the following: Amazing Fantasy #15 NM, an unrestored Action Comics #1, Mickey Mouse Magazine #1, and a Joe Simon Captain America concept sketch.

The market for comics and related collectibles continues to still be moving right along with the current economy. We recently acquired a very scarce premium ring which was produced for the Micronaughts toy line. Apparently, a few were discovered several years ago in a salesman's kit. Since that discovery several more have turned up, but even those recently found leave the total number

known well below 13! The Internet is where it's at or at least where it is currently. We continue to notice that many of the small to medium size collectible and antique shows continue to change and the net continues to be the catalyst.

Golden Age comics are moving well in all grades and we have seen more interest lately in esoteric books that are below the $200 range. People appear to be buying these books especially in high grade, as they appear cheap next to some of the more mainline titles.

Silver Age is also selling and we have noticed that the lower grade material moves best when marketed below Guide. Character toys and premiums continue to sell very well. We have seen some record prices in this area in the past year with Superman flicker rings leading the pack. Currently we are also in the process of launching our Internet website: www.monumentalcollectibles.com. We are looking forward to the summer and hope to help a lot of books find new homes. Happy Hunting to all!!

Recent sales we have seen on eBay: Donald Duck 1930's "WANNA FIGHT" Button $651; Space Patrol Hydrogen Ray Gun premium ring $128.53; Superman Flicker Ring Clark/Superman Variation $1,655.55

Golden Age Sales: Buster Brown #42 (Giveaway) GD $6.00; Detective #225 PR $78.77; Famous Funnies #209 GD $79.25, Forbidden Worlds #4 GD $25; Famous Authors Illustrated #5 GD $11.61; Superman #119 (Coverless) $8.50; Wonder Woman #68 (Coverless) $8.

Silver Age Sales: Action #339 GD $19; Nick Fury Agent Of Shield #1 VG $16.38; Showcase #31 FR $9.50.

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Our summer is here and we hope sales heat up to match the weather. The story remains the same as in recent months—collectors are patronizing auction sales and not visiting their local retail shops as much. We offer a large stock of pre-1975 comics in our store. 90% of the collectors who do drop in find books for their collection. The trick is getting more people to shop in person as opposed to the Internet. Personally, I don't buy anything expensive without checking it out in person. It seems I am now in the minority.

I was offered a group of four high grade Silver Age books this month. The guys came into the store and wanted to sell them for cash. Unfortunately, all four books had been graded and slabbed and thus were not available for inspection. Both collectors made it clear that I could only open the cases if I would agree to purchase the books. But I'm just not willing to spend any serious money without inspecting the product first. Since I was unable to look through any of the issues I passed on the deal. This is the second time in the past three months that I have faced a similar situation. I have no problem with comics being encased to be put away in a permanent collection, however speculators must accept the fact the these slabbed comics must be available to be opened when it comes time to sell. I know of few intelligent collectors who will lay out any appreciable amount without inspecting the product first!

Some days, back issue sales are great (like the old days of 10-15 years ago) and other days I sit without any serious customers checking out my stock. I know of at least a dozen serious collectors who use to buy in person at my store and other Orlando area shops—they now purchase most of their back issues on the Internet with an occasional foray into their local comic shops. Times have changed. It is still great fun to see the reaction of a vintage collector who has come into our store expecting to see the latest Pokemon or X-Men movie "crap" (as they now see in many 'comic shops') and to check out the look on their face when they see a vast amount of pre 1975 comics and related collectibles. Hopefully these people will continue to come in and purchase in person. Time will tell.

Silver Age 1956-1969: DC was our most requested group this month. High grade pre-1965 copies don't pop up too often. Showcase, Brave & Bold, and Batman were all hot this month. Amazing Spider-Man remains popular. Most 1962-1963 Marvels are in demand. Some collectors are willing to pay full Overstreet while others will pass unless the book is discounted. We do some discounting through the mail but very seldom discount at the store.

I see way too many restored Silver Age key books. I think it's time to recognize these books in the Overstreet.

Sample Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #20 VG $47; Batman #155 VG $45; Brave & Bold #30 GD $77; Detective #266 VG $35; Showcase #22 VG $595; Four Color #1127 (Three Stooges) NM $75.

Golden Age 1933-1955: We bought a nice Timely collection this month. We had been after this one for a while. Many of the books will go into our collection as our Timelys are not nearly as complete as our DC runs. We will be able to put over three dozen of these Timelys in our selling stock. Most of the demand this month was for books that we did not have for sale. Hopefully a nice group of DC, Fawcett of MLJ will pop in soon.

Sample Sales: Batman #8 VG $550; Four Color #62 FR/GD $100; Marvel Mystery #47 VG $295; Science #1 VG $25; Submariner #3 GD $400; Wambi #5 FN $25.

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The hottest, recent fad in comics collecting, appears to be slowing down. Or, at least, returning to affordable prices. I'm talking about pre-Code Horror comics.

Three years ago Gino and I bought the pre-Code Horror selections of two dealers at the 1997 San Diego Comic-Con at wholesale prices. Roughly, 50% of Guide. Shortly after, the excessive rise in popularity and prices began. The comics we purchased gained such a following and subsequent sales increase, that dealers at the 1998 Comic-Con bought them from us for resale at Guide. Within the year that became common By 1999, the buzz at the San Diego Con was how long anyone could expect to hold onto a Horror key at double Guide!

Then, unexpectedly, more copies than were seemingly known to exist popped up on eBay and elsewhere. So many copies in fact, that prices on some of them dipped at the time of the final sale. A few price samplings on eBay showed auction sales dropping all the way back to Guide, or even lower. A return to prices that have pleased and surprised our customers.

This, of course, brings up the obvious question-what's the next fad? Hard to say... since everything seems to have been tried at least once. However, if the growing number of calls and inquiries are any indication, we better salt

NAIMAN REPORT

Continued from page 78

ignore history are doomed to repeat it" is never more true than in our hobby today. As one New York City dealer so aptly said it a few years ago (and I'm paraphrasing him), "The hobby these days is made up of a few dealers who are a deft combination of charlatans and carnival barkers." Never fear observers of the comic book time-line, the circus has rolled into town again, complete with freak show, pink elephants, and carnies... PT Barnum would have been proud!

Here is a scene that I imagine will be overheard/seen at all of the upcoming summer conventions.

"Step right up," bleats the comic dealer, "and see the latest and greatest in Four Color delights. You can't touch 'em... You can't read 'em... You can't smell 'em... but they're here for your investment pleasure! They used to cost one thin dime... but for a limited time only YOU can have them for multiples of current Guide."

Up ambles the latest incarnation of this year's Investment Rube. You'll recognize the profile. He'll be 30-something, carrying a briefcase with a cell phone clipped to his hip. The pastel-colored polo shirt will be stretched over the rapidly disappearing belt that's holding up his ill-fitting Dockers.

Taking a deep breath, squaring his shoulders, setting that 'bound-and determined' look in his face, he summons up enough courage to step into the lion's den and hesitatingly asks the barker/dealer, "You got any 9.4s or better?"

The dealer does a quick, long distance olfactory scan of the customer's wallet and responds "Whatcha looking for in particular? How much do you wanna spend?"

"I dunno," sez the newly converted supplicant, "I've heard that it's gotta be a 9.4 or better or it isn't a good investment."

"Well, we've got Archie, Gold Key, Disney, Hulk, Superman, Spider-Man... you name it... we got it!"

"Aren't those (gulp!) comic books?" asks the Rube.

"Sure," responds the seller, "whaddya think they are?"

"Oh, I heard that these were short term get-rich-quick investment instruments. You know, like dot com or bio tech stocks! I used to collect baseball cards and coins... and I didn't want to miss getting in on the ground floor of this new investment opportunity. And by the way, will you buy these books back for what I paid for them if I need to sell sometime in the future?" he asks while brushing the straw from his hair.

Mr. Dealer (with a deafly trained ear) sidesteps the last question and replies, "Let's take a look at this slightly toasted 9.4 Amazing Fantasy 15... doesn't that color remind you of pure gold? It is gold! Do you know how significant this book is? It features the most important superhero of the 2nd half of the 20th century... and it's rare too! Let's talk future value here. Come into my booth and sit down" says the Spider to the Fly.

End of Imaginary Tale... or was it?

Every five years or so, we seem to flagellate ourselves with the latest and greatest investment opportunity. Who can forget the Valiant craze of 1990? The Golden Age Rush of 1995? Could this summer be the year of the Encapsulated Comic?

How many of you have looked to invest in Suspense #3 lately? Anyone remember that craze? Most of the people who chased that overpriced book (who are still in the hobby) are still smarting.

Remember the sports mogul, the musical entertainment chap, and the fitness buff who were buying high priced goods during the last Great Gold Rush of 1995? Where are they now?

Out of the hobby.

Burned by eager sellers and greedy profit mongers.

Quick fix, short-term speculators (crossing over from other hobbies) is not what this hobby needs to stay viable. Some of the power brokers in the hobby think differently. My perspective is that a handful of larger dealers have always had the most influence and access over the hobby's decision makers. Maybe it is the New Golden Rule... "He Who Has the Gold... Rules!" More effort needs to be made in determining the true market value of many books. You cannot just wait for the faithful to come to the mountain. One needs to walk among the commoners and talk with them, listen to their opinions, and record their data. Collectors, hobbyists, and Internet dealers have a vast amount of first hand knowledge to share.

Why isn't anybody listening to them?

Why did the new grading standard suddenly include VF/NM at 9.0... clearly making it seem like a NM grade to the uneducated masses?

Our hobby might have 200,000 people involved today, 10% of which we would call serious collectors. When you compare that number to other hobby demographics, it is a rather small number. We cannot afford to lose any more participants. Looking around at other popular hobbies as a bench mark, let's use the coin world for a comparison.

According to Beth Deisher, Editor of Coin World "when you define "coin collector" as someone who collectors older series of U.S., foreign, or ancient coins and spends between $2,000 and $3,000 a year on their hobby, that type of collector in the U.S. is estimated to be around 1.5 to 2 million." A 10% drop off in participation in the coin collecting hobby would amount to our entire comic collecting community ceasing to exist!"

Can we in the comic book field afford to alienate anyone? Do these new investors really know what they are buying? Are we trying to cultivate them as new collectors... or fleece them like unknowing sheep being lead to the shearing barn? While many of the recent comic book "highlight film sales" look good initially, will they hold up upon resale? Will they resale? And to whom? Time will tell.

Think of how our hobby could grow if each collector would take just one new person under their wing and introduce them to... and educate them about... this fascinating four color past time?

Altruistic... probably. Impossible... not at all!

Why not give it a try. Take a friend to a convention this summer and give him a taste of the excitement! Many officers and members of the American Association of Comicbook Collectors will be at the AACC booth in San Diego... including yours truly. If you're coming to the Con, stop by and say hello. I'd love to hear and discuss your opinion! See you there! ■

away a few extra copies of Charlton's "Young Doctors" for a rainy day! While at the Comic-Con come visit us at the Golden Age Pavilion!

Golden Age Sales: Authentic Police Cases V1#10 VG- $36; Blond Phantom #13 GD+ $90; Blue Bolt #109 VG- $59; Captain Science #7 VG $80, #11 VG- $120, #13 GD+ $72; Planet #51 VG/FN $129; Sheena #5 FN/VF $211; Space Detective #1 VG $175, #2 GD/VG $88; Sunny #13 VG $110; Terrifying Tales #12 GD/VG $50; Zoot #8 FN- $300 (trade)

Silver Age Sales: Batman #234 FN+ $30; Dr. Solar (Gold Key) #1 VG $19; Vampirella (Warren) #5 VF+ $70

Modern Age Sales: Incredible Hulk #180 NM $65; Iron Fist #14 NM #95.

TED VAN LIEW • SUPERWORLD

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Here we are at the most fun time of the year again! Summer! San Diego Con! Comic books everywhere! You feel like Uncle Scrooge, except instead of sitting on top of a pile of coins, you're on top of a pile of comics. It doesn't get any better!

Well, the '70s have more than arrived. They've passed through their ugly duckling years, and have become the Belle of the Ball! I've gotta admit, I had dissed a lot of these books years ago, but there's a lot of interesting material. My customers introduced me to a number of items that I had been completely unaware of, such as the DC 100 Page Giants, DC Specials, Weird War, Western, Worlds, etc. It seems that DC was putting out a lot of unusual and experimental stuff during this period, which collectors love to pick up now.

Besides the tried and true Superhero, Horror, Mystery, & Sword & Sorcery, both Marvel and DC tried different types of titles now and then, which didn't sell well, and are now scarce and very sought after by collectors. Almost any romance title is hard to find, along with funny titles, such as Peter the Little Pest, Homer the Happy Ghost, and others. There are some interesting Western titles, like Outlaw Kid, Ringo Kid, and Mighty Marvel Western.

Romance & Melodrama include Young Love, Young Romance, Night Nurse, and DC 100 Page #5 and Super DC Giant #17 and 21 (which are extremely difficult to find).

The mainstream 15 & 20¢ers sell really quickly in higher grades, as prices are still cheap on most. I also think all the books from the months in 1971 that Marvel put out 25¢ giants are real sleepers, even from secondary titles.

In Silver Age, it's simple. Anything sells... if it's in high grade! We're finding that the higher quality material from 1962-70 has gotten markedly harder to locate in any quantity than even a year or two ago. Consequently, the competition has intensified and prices are rising almost weekly on many books.

There is still a solid collector market for the lesser grade books. Collectors and readers will never actually get priced out of the market, because the lower grades remain a bargain, and are often offered at a discount price. 10¢ cover price books are in total demand in almost any grade... you takes 'em as you can find 'em. Most collectors will pick up a particular issue they need to fill a hole in a run, regardless of grade. In fact, many people want lower grades on these so they can pay less and obtain more books.

Golden Age and '50's Genre books remain strong, and will always be so. At some point, they may segue from being collectibles to being actual antiques, but they will always be historically important, at the very least.

It's been nice to see a resurgence in interest in Fawcetts and Qualitys. We've sold an unprecedented amount of Capt. Marvel, Master, Marvel Family, Wow, Hit, National, Police, Plastic Man, Capt. Marvel Jr., and others recently. These books have outstanding contents. The Timelys generally have the best covers, but these guys have better insides!

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The back issue market remains very strong, and although a large portion of the sales take place via the Internet, this is still shaping up to be the best convention season since the high grade Golden Age boom of the mid 1990s... and with a wider variety of material in demand.

Our high grade Marvels were a complete sellout, with all issues being snapped up within a week of being offered. Oddball 1970's books also continue to be strong sellers.

Original art sales continue at a record setting pace too, limited only by the availability of fresh pieces.

Recent Sales: Action #252 FR/GD $100; Amazing Spider-Man #2 GD $124, #3 GD/GD+ $161, #5 GD/GD+ $100, #6 NM $1250, #8 NM $800, #14 VG $122.

Batman #76 FR $46, #95 GD+/VG- $32; Dick Tracy #141-145 VG the set $330; Fantastic Four #3 GD/GD+ $161, #5 FR/GD $118; Incredible Hulk #1 VG (coupon out of one ad page) $513, Hulk Annual #1 NM $110; Lois Lane #1 GD+ $300; Justice League #1 GD/GD+ $100; MAD #1 PR/FR $185; X-Men #2 GD+ (with one ad page missing) $102.

And finally, from the **not-so-hot-anymore files:** Night Nurse #1 VF $37, #2 VF+ $26 (I also sold the original cover art of #2 for $737), #4 VF+ $18.50.

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In a recent report, one writer stated that he believed that most comics sales are now taking place on eBay. I don't think that this is the case. I would estimate that no more than 10% of total comics sales are being made over all the various web sites, eBay included. Perhaps someone should do a study. (Mel Thompson, would be a good person to enlist.)

EBay can be profitable if done right. After having done over 200 sales on eBay, I have detremined the following seels best:

• Items that you have discovered a high demand/value for. This is rare! You will have to research many items in vain to find one that regularly sells for over Guide. Here are some examples that I found. Adventure Comics #462 VF... it features the death of Batman! The Guide price is $10 and it went for $50.66 on my eBay auction! Amazing World of DC Comics #9 Legion Issue (not in Guide) went for $47.50. It's the only issue of the series that sells for much on eBay.

• Sets. If you have a complete set you can often get decent money for the lot. You also save time as you only have to list, deal with, and ship one thing.

The timing of your auctions is important as well. Often the price jumps by quite a bit in the last few minutes or even seconds of an auction! Many buyers look mainly at the auc-

eBay Report

by Mike Gronning

Comics with classic covers go for very high prices. Good girl covers, Matt Baker, Alex Schomburg, L.B. Cole, and genre covers are all selling like wildfire. The original cover art on some books goes for even more.

The Bernie Wrightson cover to Swamp Thing #8 had an ending bid of $12,200 and it didn't even meet reserve! There are lots of items on eBay that don't meet reserve that have high prices like the Wrightson cover.

A Flame #5 (actually the first issue of the Ajax series) started off with a bid of $4.50 and was sold for $19.45. This book is an 8 in Gerber and recently a copy in a little better shape sold for more than $100. Good copies of Ajax books sell fairly well with their superhero books usually going for above Guide.

A set of the first series Phantom Strangers, #1-6, sold for $415.88. The books were beat but complete and started with a bid of $8.50. That's a good buy for the complete set. Single Fair to Good copies can go for as much as this set sold for.

An unread VF copy of Great Action #9, which is a Phantom Lady reprint, sold for $40 after starting with a bid of $24. Another one surfaced shortly after with the same opening bid. The NM and Super reprints can be found frequently on eBay. Some go for outrageously high prices, while others go very low.

A Superboy #1 did not meet its reserve price. The book started at $1 and finished with a $985 bid, it received 14 bids, but was not sold.

A MAD #1 with a few problems did not get a single bid at the starting price of $795.

And a Captain Aero #10 — the classic LB. Cole space cover suffered the same fate. It started with a $550 bid and ended with no one taking a chance on it. It was graded at a solid Fine, but listed several tears on the front cover, a some tape and tear, a corner flap out and some creasing at the bottom corner. The book was nice, in my opinion, a Fine.

Will overgrading continue to be a problem on eBay after a few more years? And does the Comic Guaranty Company's watering of comics help them sell better? I spoke to one seller who said he had to re-list several of his books at lower prices because they didn't sell when graded by CGC. But, a lot of books do seem to be selling well when graded by the third-party service.

As far as modern sales go, Charlton's "last gasp" issues from 1984-86 all sell well. They usually start low, but move as high as $30 an issue! With Overstreet listing some of the least books as having low print runs, collectors are snatching these books up.

Charlton isn't the only hot company on eBay. Some Christian Comics are very hot right now, especially Hand The Girl Who Loved The Swastika and Archie and the Ethel Hand seem to be the favorite of eBay lovers and the Big Ethel issue is listed in Overstreet as having a low print run. Tom Landry and the Dallas Cowboys is also a popular issue. But, all the Spire books are going for more than Guide prices. There are plenty of lots for bidders to choose from (usually), but all go for well over their starting prices. Creatures sell well, like the Dennis the Menace Digests from Marvel that have the DC logo pressed on them. I've seen two of these go for fairly high prices lately on eBay.

Original art is in demand too, especially today's hot artists and the classic artists. An original L.B. Cole Classics Illustrated page 3 from Wild Animals I Have Known (issue #152) recently sold for $100. Be careful, though, that you don't get burned by a seller claiming to be a professional comic artist. A lot of the artists on eBay are great copiers, but that's it.

A lot of color guides are for sale on the internet. These are a great way to own an original piece of production art at cheap prices.

And, a lot of Dan DeCarlo art is for sale on eBay. We'll have to wait and see if the deceased from Archie has any effect on the prices of his art.

That's all for now. See you in a future issue of *Alter Ego*.

tions that are about to close. I recommend a seven day auction in most cases. On weekdays, you will want to start them between 6 pm and 10 pm Pacific time, so people will be home from work to see them close. One retailer said that Friday is the worst night to post. Weekends are good, with Sunday, between 1pm and 5pm the best.

In conclusion, eBay is a useful and interesting tool. Like any tool it has its limitations. Nothing can replace the experience of dealing face to face at a convention or store.

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It has been an exciting spring as both the "comic book" and "original comic art" markets have been on fire, especially, if you have the right material. And what are the right comics to have? High grade, High grade, High grade!!! And what are the right high grade books to have? Right! Early Marvels ('61-'64) and '50's Horror. And don't forget those early '70's books in high grade that are so hard to find. Prices are escalating rapidly as these books are HOT! Collectors and dealers are paying high prices to extract these rare books from private collections. Many comics are bringing record prices. 9x and 3x Guide is the order of the day, particularly, if condition is strict NM- or better.

And if you're not convinced just check out the prices realized at the April, Greg Manning Auction. Books with certified grading of 9.2 (NM-) by CGC were bringing up to 2x Guide.

I recently began selling a few books from my "Cold Spring Collection." Highlights include pre 2000 Guide sales of Journey into Mystery #83 NM $13,000 and Spider-Man #11 NM $1,300.

Overall, most genres of comics are selling in all grades as it appears there is an influx of new collectors coming into our market. I'm seeing a lot of new faces at the comic book and original comic art conventions. I regularly attend most major east coast shows, Chicago Wizard and San Diego Comic Cons where I see many of my regular clients and fellow dealers. Both collectors and dealers are busily

Sotheby's Auction Highlights

By Aaron Manson

The following are sales highlights from the Sotheby's Comic Books & Comic Art auction held June 17, 2000 in New York.

Comic Books

Action #1 AACC appFN- $41,000
Action #1 CGC GD/VG3.0 $74,350
All Flash #1 CGC GD2.0 $960
All Winners #1 CGC FN6.0 $7,200
Amazing Fantasy #15 AACC appFN- $1,440
Amazing Fantasy #15 AACC FN- $1,800
Amazing Fantasy #15 AACC VG $2,040
Amazing Fantasy #15 CGC NM9.4 $55,375
Amazing Spider-Man #1 AACC VG- $1,440
Avengers #1 CGC VF+8 5 $1,800
Big Book of Fun Comics nn AACC VG $5,100
Big Book of Fun Comics nn AACC VG- $4,200
Crypt of Terror #17 (Gaines File Copy) CGC NM+9.6 $7,800
Detective #10 CGC VG4.0 $1,440
Detective #27 AACC appFN/FN- $37,550
Detective #38 CGC GD/VG3.0 $3,300
Funnies on Parade nn (1933) CGC FN/VF7.0 $7,800
Famous Funnies A Carnival of Comics nn (1933) CGC FN-5.5 $2,160
Green Lantern #1 (First series) CGC FN6.0 $8,400
Journey Into Mystery #83 CGC VF8.0 $1,560
Mickey Mouse Magazine #1 AACC appGD $1,080
NY Worlds Fair 1939 (Cover almost detached) CGC VG/FN5.0 $3,300
NY Worlds Fair 1940 CGC FN/VF7.0 $3,900
Secret Diary of Eerie Adv. nn (1953, Avon) CGC FN/VF7.0 $2,280
Superboy #1 AACC VG+ $1,200
Superman nn (#1) CGC GD-1.8 $13,200
Superman nn (#1) AACC appGD+ $5,100
Superman #2 (Pennsylvania) CGC FN+6.5 $3,900
Superman #3 (Pennsylvania) CGC FN+6.5 $4,500
Superman #4 (Pennsylvania) CGC VF+4.5 $1,080
Superman #5 (Pennsylvania) CGC FN/VF7.0 $1,920
Suspense #11 (1946, Continental) CGC VF-7.5 $2,700
Strange Adventures #9 (White Mountain) CGC NM+9.6 $6,000
Tales from the Crypt #20 (Gaines File) CGC NM/MT9.8 $5,700
Tales of Suspense #39 CGC NM-9.2 $4,500
Tales to Astonish #27 AACC FN+ $1,200
Voodoo Annual #1 (1952, Farrell) CGC FN+6.5 $1,200
World's Best #1 CGC FN/VF7.0 $4,500
X-Men #1 CGC VF/NM9.0 $5,100

Sotheby's consultant, Jerry Weist, holds the White Mountain copy of *Strange Adventures* #9 which sold for $6,000 (3.75 x Guide). Alex Ross' Batman painting went for $72,625!

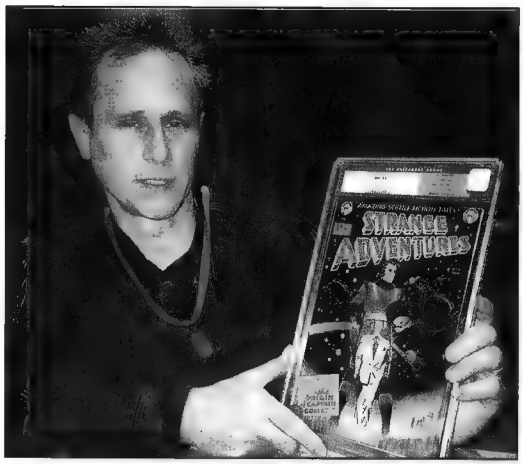

PHOTO CREDIT: AARON MANSON

Original Art:

Wood, Weird Science Fantasy #26, page 11 $1,800
Wood, Weird Science Fantasy #26, page 28 $1,080
Montana, Archie #1, splash $21,450
Simon, Captain America watercolor/pen & ink circa 1939-40 $24,900

buying and trading.

The following prices in trade were realized in exchange for early Marvel Jack Kirby original comic art: Adventure Comics #40 appVF/NM (moderate rest. by Susan Cicconi) $10,000; Batman #1 NM (Denver Copy, lightly cleaned and pressed) $90,000; Flash #8 CGC FN $1,200; Four Color #9 CGC VG/FN $2,400; Hulk #1 CGC FN+ $2,500; MAD #1 CGC VF- $3,500; Sensation #1 appVF/NM (moderate rest. by Susan Cicconi) $10,000; Superman #100 CGC VF (moderate rest. by Matt Wilson) $1,000; Tales Of Suspense #39 CGC FN/VF, $1,300.

Another trend is becoming increasingly evident and, in fact, verifiable. In my opinion, CGC books appear to be easier to sell or trade and sometimes realize higher prices. I've found them to be very strict graders (and a small percentage of times, over graders). If they can remain consistent, it will work. (But I still want to open up the book and smell it!)

Finally, original comic art is hot and the prices on '70's covers are increasing every time they change hands. Artists in demand include Ditko, Kirby, Swan, Kubert, Anderson, Infantino, Wood, Williamson, Frazetta, Romita, Steranko, Adams, Frank Miller, Buscema, and more. See you all at the summer conventions in New York City, San Diego, and Chicago!

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual reporters. Comic and art prices can vary widely.

Remembering Bill Gaines!

(Continued from page 30)

out very quickly, so he went to I believe Dell and he sold them on the idea of doing the first commercial issue of *Famous Funnies*. If you go into *Overstreet's Comic Price Guide*, there's a *Famous Funnies* roman numeral one, and a *Famous Funnies* Arabic number one, and one was a one-shot, and one was the first issue of a series. Dad didn't continue them very long; it may have been no more than one or two issues and unloaded them onto, I think Eastern Color Printing Company, who published *Famous Funnies* for the next, what was it? Twenty years.

RINGGENBERG: Was your father being really caught up in the business then... really excited by it?

GAINES: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. He was a shirtsleeves person like I am and he just went down there and he got to work. Early on he acquired Shelly Mayer as his editor and he and Shelly were together until my father sold the business to DC and retired... for a week. But, Shelly went to DC, where he still is as far as I know. In those days there was DC, and my father's group were called AA, and I'm not 100 percent clear on all of this but I think what happened was that my father and Donenfeld went into partnership and Donenfeld, in a typically generous turn one day, gave his half of the business to Jack Leibowitz.

So my father became partners with Jack Leibowitz, and this was the downtown branch... and the uptown branch was DC, which might have been called National Comics then, I don't know... and that was owned by Leibowitz and Donenfeld... and then they brought Independent News into it, which had been owned by Paul Samplanner.

So now the three men became partners in both National Comics and Independent News. Then there were some disagreements between my father and the other three and he suggested that they either sell him their half or buy his half, and they opted to buy his half, and that's how DC acquired AA, with all their characters... Wonder Woman, The Green Lantern, and everything else that came afterward.

RINGGENBERG: Was your dad in on the creation of those characters, or did he have the editors do it?

GAINES: Well, largely the editors, I think, but he was in on the creation of Wonder Woman. Wonder Woman was created by my father and a psychologist named William Moulton Marston, whose widow, I think, is still getting royalties on it, and if you'll notice, even to this day, I believe, Wonder Woman is written by a Charles Moulton. Well, that was my father's middle name and Marston's middle name, and that's where Charles Moulton came from.

(CBM EDITOR'S NOTE: "Charles" is M.C. Gaines' middle name... "Moulton" is William M. Marston's middle name... thus the pseudonym "Charles Moulton")

RINGGENBERG: That must have been pretty exciting, coming up with a totally new medium and running with it.

GAINES: (Mumble)

RINGGENBERG: Your father was involved in comics ever since they were created. Do you remember any memorable stories from the office... or your father at home?

GAINES: I'm sure there are many memorable stories, but I'm damned if I can remember them. My father was a great practical joker, but most of this was done out of the office, although many times against his business associates.

RINGGENBERG: What kinds of things would he do?

GAINES: Well, once there was an attorney associated with National, whose name was Abe Mennon, and Abe was a good violinist, and he had a very expensive, fine violin. I don't think it was a Stradivarius, but something akin to it, and at some party, with Mennon's help... because Mennon might have had a heart attack otherwise... my father pretended to get drunk and snatch the violin out of his hands and smash it. And there was a deathly silence (chuckle), and Donenfeld came running up and said, 'Abe, I'll buy you a new one' as though you can just go out and buy one of those things.

Of course, it was then revealed that it was a joke. That kind of thing. He had a fine collection of books, but he had a lot of cheap ones, kind of handy, and someone would go in and take one of his books and start to look at it and then my father, switching the book, would scream that he'd damaged the book, and rip the book up, and of course, give that guy a heart attack for a few minutes... that kind of thing. I always enjoyed these things because I enjoyed that kind of humor.

RINGGENBERG: Do you have any memories of Sheldon Mayer or Harry Donenfeld?

GAINES: Oh, I don't have any memories of Donenfeld because I didn't know him very well. I did see him here and there, but I was just a kid and I don't think he paid any attention... and by the time I came along as a publisher, soon after that, I think, Donenfeld suffered a fall in his apartment and had brain damage, which kind of reduced him to a vegetable, I think, for a few years. And then he died.

It was a terrible tragedy, so I really never got to know him too well. Jack Leibowitz I knew very well, and I think he's just one of the nicest, finest people in the world. I haven't seen much of him lately, but I always remember him with fondness. Paul Samplanner the same way, a very fine person. Paul left the business and then died many years ago. The only one of the original four that was doing all this business was Leibowitz.

RINGGENBERG: And Leibowitz is still associated with Warner?

GAINES: Oh, yes. As far as I know, Jack is still on the Board of Directors at Warner because he came in with a terribly large, important, valued property... so he's represented. The property being, of course, Independent News, DC, and *MAD*, and I don't know, maybe four other (things)....

RINGGENBERG: And Sheldon Mayer?

GAINES: Oh, Shelly Mayer I knew very well, because when I was a kid kicking around the office, he was the editor. Shelly and I had a very long friendship, which still continues, except I just never see him now because he's moved up into the boon-

docks, and I rarely leave Manhattan to go to the boondocks. But I love Shelly and I love his wife... they're both wonderful people.

Shelly and I used to go down where we were on Lafayette Street then, 225 Lafayette. We'd go down for lunch every day and go through the vegetable and fruit vendors. In those days, the East Side was still the East Side, and they were all lined with push-carts, and for fifteen, twenty cents you'd come back with a bag of vegetables and fruit that would sink a ship.

I remember doing that all summer for at least one or two summers with Shelly. He was busy, but he managed to find time for me and we liked each other.

If he isn't warm and funny anymore it's because he's old and sick, and he is getting old and I know he's been sick for many years. Does he still do *Sugar & Spike*?

RINGGENBERG: Yeah, I think DC's bringing them back, they're doing a line of kids' books.

GAINES: Oh, great. That's nice.

RINGGENBERG: The last time I was up there a couple of days ago, they had Xeroxes of some new covers that he had drawn up on one of the editors' walls.

GAINES: Oh, beautiful. Because Shelly was a fun guy in his day, and he's just been stuck up there in the middle of nowhere with his wife and they're both ill, and have been for many years.

RINGGENBERG: What kind of man was your father?

GAINES: That's a very hard question to ask a son. Sons generally have difficult relationships with their fathers. I didn't appreciate him when he was alive, a mistake we all make. He was very much into his business and he would go in early and work late... and worked hard until he retired.

Then he decided to come back into business and started working hard all over again. But it was hard for him because he'd lost all his contacts... he'd sold them with the business, sold his paper contracts, and this was right after the war and things were difficult. And, of course, he'd sold his staff.

And he'd had a wonderful staff built up, from Shelly Mayer on down, but he couldn't use them any more because he'd sold them, so he found it difficult to get back into business. He tried to do it with a line of children's comics like *Tiny Tot Comics* and *Land Of The Lost*... and I don't remember all the titles.

RINGGENBERG: Where does *Picture Stories From the Bible* fit in?

GAINES: That came in between. He was doing that, when he sold his comics. He didn't sell that. That was very successful, for a while. He sold an awful lot of those, but to try and get back into newsstand comics, he found it very difficult. And at the time of his death, he had been losing money because the titles that he was putting out weren't successful.

RINGGENBERG: And then the business was handed over to you.

GAINES: Well, very reluctantly, I think... I felt that if he couldn't make a go of it, how the hell could I make a go of it, and I wasn't interested anyway. And I really did it as a favor to my mother. My advice to her was 'shut it down.' And I'm glad she didn't.

RINGGENBERG: When you took over EC, what were your interests?

GAINES: Well, I was going to be a chemistry teacher. I was finishing up my work to be a chemistry teacher and that's what I wanted to do. Again, I'm awfully glad that I didn't, because I've had a lot more fun in comics than I would've as a chemistry teacher, I'm sure.

RINGGENBERG: I've read a little bit about the EC days... it sounded like you had a pretty good time.

GAINES: That was a good three or four years. I always say those were the happiest days. Since I've come to *MAD*, or since *MAD* has become my only business, I enjoy it very much, but it's not as much fun because I'm in the business end. In those days I had nothing to do with the business, I had a business manager and I was just having fun with Feldstein creating this stuff... and plotting, and being an editor... and it was just great!

RINGGENBERG: Do you think you'll continue to stick with *MAD*, or do you see any kind of retirement on the horizon?

GAINES: Well, I'll eventually retire, I don't know when. I'll say two to four years on that. I have no target date. And I plan to stay with *MAD* for a while. It's just that I... I don't know if this is of any interest to your readership... but I developed this business all alone. I still run *MAD* like a Mom and Pop candy store and I do it all myself, and it's very wearying. I have no one to help because I never developed anyone to help me. So, the next guy that comes along, I'm sure they'll have enough sense... to do it all differently!

RINGGENBERG: Your editor, Al Feldstein, retired...

GAINES: Feldstein retired at the end of last year. He was never any help to me, any more than I was help to him. He was the editor, and that's a whole different department, which I never had too much to do with. Feldstein and I had great rapport, and almost everything he did I approved of, so I never kept much touch on what he was doing until the final book. I always read the book just before it went down and rarely found anything to quibble with.

RINGGENBERG: So who are the new editors now?

GAINES: Well now the new editors are the two who used to be the associate editors, Nick Meglin and John Ficara, and they brought two new boys in to become editorial assistants to replace them. And everything seems to be running smoothly, but time will tell. (Laughter) You don't find these things out for six months and if it's running at the end of six months, I guess it's okay.

RINGGENBERG: When you were doing EC Comics back in the old days, did you ever have any idea that they were going to be as highly regarded as they are now?

GAINES: No. No. We knew what we were doing was considered quality material and we worked very hard to make it that way, but we didn't think it would become

Remembering Bill Gaines!

(Continued from page 89)

anything like a 'classic.' We were just trying to make a buck and make a living... and when you consider the fact that we had the weakest distributor and got the lowest price of anybody, I think we did very well.

We made a lot of money for a few years, till the roof fell in, in a couple of different ways. But, back in those days, while DC was getting five and three quarters cents for a ten cent comic, we were getting five and a half. And we were the only company that was so weak that that was the best deal we could get. Those quarter cents make a tremendous difference when you add up all the comics you sell. That's a lot of money that we didn't get and we had to exist without.

Despite that, we were very successful and made a lot of money. We had respectable sales.

RINGGENBERG: Just out of curiosity, what kind of numbers were you selling in those days? I know that *Superman* would sell a million copies...

GAINES: Oh, sure. We never got that high. The highest we ever got was half a million, but that was still very respectable.

RINGGENBERG: Was this for one of the horror titles, like *Tales From The Crypt*?

GAINES: They would sell about four, four or four-fifty (450,000). The science fiction would sell... at the beginning it was selling three (300,000), but then it fell off. Harvey's war books were doing very well until the Korean War was over and then they fell off. *Shock* and *Crime Suspense* always sold well... not as well as the horror, but better than anything else.

It fell just about the way you could predict, but the most shocking books sold the best, and then the next most shocking book sold the next best, and so on. Really, what we considered our class act, the science fiction, sold the worst. Then *MAD* came along, and *MAD* had its peak as a comic with 750,000, I think. Now, that was very, very good... better than the horror comics.

RINGGENBERG: Were you surprised by *MAD*'s success? Did you think that people would take to it that quickly?

GAINES: Probably not. I mean probably I was very surprised, and I didn't think that they would. But what had happened here, and of course, this story has been batted about a thousand times, and Harvey (Kurtzman) and I each have our different versions....

But from my point of view what happened was that Harvey was putting out two comics in the time that Feldstein was putting out seven. Now since I paid by the issue, that meant that Feldstein was making three and half times as much as Kurtzman, and so Harvey was very unhappy with this arrangement.

So I said, 'Harvey, it's very simple, you're a humorist. You can put out a humor book very quickly." Boy was I wrong about that. "And you'll up your income fifty percent" because I figured he could do a humor book quickly.

It took him about a month to write and edit each war comic. He was very slow. Well, he was just as slow with *MAD*, because he ended up dropping the war comics to do *MAD*, and my economic plan for him never quite worked out.

RINGGENBERG: Did you know what to make of *MAD* when you first saw it? As a humor comic it was pretty bizarre. It wasn't like anything that had come before.

GAINES: Well, I was in on it. I saw it happening, so I wasn't exactly surprised. Actually, I've gone back and read *MAD* #1, and I don't think it's nearly as good today as I thought it was then... and then I thought it was a very fine magazine. In retrospect, I don't think it was.

He (Harvey) hit his stride by (issue) three or four and then got really good. The first three issues lost money. With "Superduperman" in there, it took off... and I think he (Harvey) found that you have to lampoon something specific. In his first issues, he was a little general. I think the specific thing he lampooned was the Lone Ranger in issue three, and that's when he really found the way... and that was very successful. By (issue) four, with Superman, he really took off.

Love and Marriage

(Continued from page 72)

universe. *Crime SuspenStories* #11 presents a marital battleground in "Stiff Punishment." Page 5 of this tale contains as stark a picture of extreme domestic violence as would ever be attempted even today. "This was the showdown"–Indeed! Johnny Craig's depiction of Fred and Jo Ann's final knockdown, drag out fight is a graphic art tour de force. His clean, naturalistic rendering enhances the effect of a prosaic domestic argument gone terribly, fatally wrong.

The EC universe ended as it began, with the last story in the last EC horror comic concerning itself with avarice and hatred between spouses. In "Tatter Up" in *Tales from the Crypt* #46, Tony Barrett marries Fanny only because he hears she has one hundred thousand dollars stashed somewhere in her crumbling old mansion. Tony is young and virile while Fanny has one foot in the grave. After months of fruitless searching, Tony still hasn't turned up the loot. In a fit of rage, he does Fanny in with a pick axe. After killing her, he decides to go even further: "then I went to work on that face... that awful, ugly face. It was just somethin' I had to do... like I was gettin' even for havin' degraded myself by makin' love to it all those months." Even the new writers brought in by Feldstein towards the end of the New Trend felt obliged to go over the same well-plowed ground.

So, is the EC universe only a misogynistic nightmare world of woman-hating? The author would answer with a qualified "no," since men as well are often portrayed as horrid, selfish, greedy cads with no feelings for anyone save themselves. I would say the point of these EC stories is not that women are evil, but that mankind itself is inherently depraved. As Bill Gaines put it so many times, "people are no damn good!" In the EC universe, the female gender is portrayed as no worse, but no better, than the male. Perhaps, this is the ultimate in equality between the sexes. In the EC universe, women are as beyond redemption as men. ■

Sotheby's Sells Historic Captain America Sketch

The original Captain America concept sketch, drawn by Cap creator Joe Simon, sold at the June 17th Sotheby's auction (lot #384) for $24,900. The historic drawing, done in pen & ink and watercolors, is the original drawing submitted to Timely publisher Martin Goodman to get the go ahead to publish the now-famous character. The piece, accompanied by a letter of authenticity by Joe Simon, bears the handwritten inscription "Martin–Here's the character–I think he should have a kid buddy or he'll be talking to himself all the time–I'm working up Script–Send Schedule– Regards, Joe."

When asked about the origin of the historically important art, Joe Simon recalled, "That piece first appeared before the public in 1974. Phil Seuling called me and asked me if he could use the piece (or a likeness of the piece) for the cover of a convention program book. Back in the early '70s, Phil used to run a lot of conventions in New York. I was very unaccustomed to receiving any money for my work back in those days as the comic book companies did not pay the artists for any reprints... so I was thrilled when Phil offered to give me $150 for the use of the sketch.

"The origin of my sketch is still clear in my mind. I was working as an editor for Fox Publications... plus at the same time I had my own business down on West 45th Street in New York City. That was when I brought in Jack Kirby to help me. We were putting out Blue Bolt for Funnies Inc. plus a lot of other stuff for other shops. I was also doing a lot of work for Lloyd Jacquet at his Funnies Inc. studio. Funnies Inc. was supplying material to Martin Goodman at Timely.

"Because of this, I had direct contact with Martin Goodman, who eventually 'stole' me away from Lloyd Jacquet. At any rate I had been shopping the drawing, looking for a publisher and eventually showed it directly to Martin Goodman. I thought Captain America would be a good idea primarily because I thought Hitler would make such a great villain... and Cap was the perfect hero to fight Hitler.

Simon continued: "I had previously gone through several other incarnations, including "The American" and "The Patriot." I got the name of "The Patriot" from *The Patriot Magazine*, a political magazine I was doing covers for at the time. I discarded all these other names and decided on Captain America and stayed with Captain America from about 1939 on.

"When Martin Goodman saw the drawing he loved it right away and said, 'Let's go with it.' Martin even decided to do something different from the industry standard and give Captain America his own book right away. Characters usually had to be tried out first before they got their own magazines, but he liked Captain America so much that he just decided to give the character his own magazine right from the start.

"So I got the drawing back from Martin, but then a little while later he asked for it back. This time, Martin needed the drawing to show to his distributor, Kable News, and the drawing got away from me after that. I didn't see it again until decades later.

Joe Simon concluded by adding: "To my knowledge the drawing is the earliest known rendition of Captain America in existence."

Already the object of discussion by both comic historians and Captain America collectors around the country, the sketch is often described as "important" and "unique" because of its extremely early vintage and the fact that it predates the publication of *Captain America* #1 by at least a year and three months. Sotheby's obtained the original art "From a Private Family Trust Collection."

Simon created Captain America just before America's entry into WWII and assigned the rights to publish his comic book to Timely Publications, which later became Marvel Comics. The copyright law permits creators of material copyrighted before 1978, who sold their creations decades ago for small sums, to recover the rights to their works for up to 39 years of what is now a copyright term of 95 years. Coincidentally, Simon should recapture the Captain America copyright effective December 7, 2001, the 60th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, which plunged the US into WWII.

NEWS *Continued*

Scott Shaw!'s Oddball Comics hits the Internet daily!

LOS ANGELES, CA - Comic Book Resources, a comic book news web site, announced the addition of popular cartoonist Scott Shaw! and his 'Oddball Comics' as a regular columnist.

"My goal with Comic Book Resources is to have the most unique comics-related columns on the web. That's why I asked Scott Shaw! to join the crew. Scott Shaw!'s 'Oddball Comics' is a perfect example of a unique and different column... No one else is doing a column like Scott's anywhere," said Jonah Weiland, Executive Producer of Comic Book Resources.

"If anyone's seen Scott do his 'Oddball Comics' slide show presentation at a convention, you know how hilarious it is. 'Oddball Comics' is a fascinating look into the history of comic books that exposes some of the most embarrassing moments in our past.

"Having Scott Shaw! at Comic Book Resources further helps our site maintain its position as one of the leading online sources of comics news, commentary, and entertainment. This is an exciting time for comic fans around the web and I encourage them to join me in welcoming Scott to the site."

Comic Book Resources, located in Los Angeles, CA, has been on the Internet since 1995. One of the largest comic book information sites on the Internet, Comic Book Resources describes itself as a "comic book community with news, reviews, message boards, and live chats, among other features."

Comic Book Resources is a division of Boiling Point Productions, an LA-based web design and hosting firm. The site can be accessed at www.comicbookresources.com.

High Grade Golden Age set new sales records!

WEST CALDWELL, NJ - Greg Manning Auctions, Inc., (GMAI) together with Metropolis Collectibles, Inc., announced the recent purchase of what they described as "the world's best collection of *More Fun Comics*" an individual's private collection valued at nearly $1 million. It includes one comic valued at more than $200,000. That comic is said to be "the most expensive comic book ever sold."

The collection of 120 of a possible 127 issues in the *More Fun* run took six years to put together and contains nearly 70 "Mile High" copies, including *More Fun* #52, 53, and 54. The Mile High copy of *More Fun* #52 (as valued in this collection).

The collection includes specimens from other pedigree collections as well, including the issues from the Larson, Rockford, and "D" collections.

Bill Hughes, vice president of collectibles for GMAI, commented, "Greg Manning Auctions was presented with this opportunity because of our strength and standing in the comic book and comic art market. It is a rare occasion that a collection of this magnitude comes up for sale and we simply could not pass up the opportunity to acquire it."

Vincent Zurzolo, Metropolis vice president, said, "Any one of these books could stand alone as likely the finest copy in the world. An entire collection of this quality, with so many high-grade issues, is truly breathtaking."

Stephen Fishler, president of Metropolis, stated, "The immaculate condition of this collection is unmatched... the rich color saturation of the covers, combined with the bright white pages, are a remarkable sight."

The majority of the collection will be certified by CGC, a third-party grading company. The collection will be available in upcoming Greg Manning Auctions, Inc. Comic Book and Comic Art Auctions, through Metropolis' web site, and at the upcoming San Diego and Chicago conventions this summer.

Bill Hughes added, "We've had a few other record setting sales too... we have recently placed the Allentown copy of *Detective Comics* #29 for $100,000... and the Overstreet collection copy of *Batman* #1 for $150,000."

CBM's All-Marvel Spectacular!

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and **Ditko's Dr. Strange!**

Continued from page 7

Scarce or rare?

Went to a comic show last Sunday and much to my surprise I found a copy of Sabrina, The Teenage Witch #1. I don't know if this comic is considered scarce or plentiful, but it's the first one I remember seeing. I'd be interested in hearing from any CBM readers who have any ideas about the scarcity of this book or others… such as the Dell series, The Mighty Heroes, or the 1962-63 80 page giant issue of Rudolph. It has a scarcity value of "6" in Gerber, but Overstreet lists it as rare.

How about Frontier Fighters #3. It has a Gerber rating of "7" but Overstreet doesn't list it as rare. They do however list "Danger Trail" #3 as rare even though it also has a Gerber rating of "7." If any CBM readers have any thoughts on this, I'd love to hear them.

Jeff Dahlstrom, via E-mail

It's called your wallet

Gary, bravo on your CBM #78 editorial about the "softening" of comic book grading. Comic book defects cannot be dismissed when grading. A book should be graded per the definitions found in the Overstreet Price Guide and on the sum of its parts, in their entirety.

Also, I don't believe the new grading scale will soften grading or contribute to the existing problem in and of itself. The problem already infects the industry at all levels. Case in point, below is the actual text from a reputable online Internet dealer and their description of a book: "Korak, Son of Tarzan, #36 July, 1970. Gold key. Int. NM, front-c shows wear & spine has visible stress marks. Back-c has two tears."

Say what? If the above book has the defects described… IT IS NOT NEAR MINT! This type of selective grading more than anything infuriates me as a collector. It's the old, "Well, if it didn't have that water damage and missing back cover it would be worth $300 zillion dollars." Well, Sir, show me that book and we'll talk. Otherwise, price this book in the FAIR grade it deserves.

The good news is that as a collector the solution to this problem is simple; only deal with dealers who have proven themselves or that seem intent on earning your business. Keep in mind that grading is selective and an inexact science at best. It's not uncommon that you disagree with a seller's grading. However, these differences should be minute and based on personal taste, not dismissed defects.

In the end, remember as the buyer you hold the key. It's called your wallet. And like me with the online Internet dealer example above, I kept mine in my pocket and moved on.

John Coates, Georgia

Trashy, sleazy, and salacious

CBM #77 was a delight to read, particularly the feature on the Atlas-Seaboard comics of the seventies. Atlas Comics were mostly trashy, sleazy, and salacious; just the sort of "qualities" that appealed to me as a 15-year-old kid in 1975! (Particularly DEVILINA No.2 - a classic example of the comic book occult craze of the seventies).

I remember eagerly collecting every Atlas comic I could find (except for Vicki and Gothic Romances) and they were quite plentiful over here in England. I suspect I was in the minority though, as unsold back issues turned up in late '75 as half-price stock on our newsstands.

Regarding the identities of the unknown Atlas cover artists, I'd suggest that a lot of the covers you're uncertain about may be the work of Ron Wilson perhaps? The inking style looks very much like Mike Esposito's work, so he might be another contender. Another strong possibility is that Larry Lieber drew the covers himself maybe?

I often wondered why no publisher had revived any of the Atlas characters over the past 25 years. As your article reveals that many of the creators owned all or part of their characters, I now understand the reason. I guess no company is going to spend time and resources sorting out complicated copyright issues of strips who barely made a mark the first time round. Maybe it's best to leave Tiger Man and friends in 1975 where they belong. Keep up the good work.

Best regards,

Lew Stringer, England

Greg Manning auction

First of all, I want to offer my congratulations on the great work that all of you are doing at CBM. There really is no other magazine like yours, and I look forward every month to what you are going to offer. The letters, editorial column, and market reports are usually what I look to first, but the various feature articles usually pique my interest in areas of the hobby that would otherwise have been a mystery to me. Case in point, I can say without hesitation that your magazine is responsible for every war and combat book in my collection. Up until CBM #47 I hadn't even considered the genre.

So, why am I writing? Well, this past weekend I participated in the Greg Manning comic auction via the Internet. It was a great event and Greg Manning and his team did a magnificent

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job on the catalog and on the execution of the event itself. But it left me wondering, am I the only one who was completely astounded at the prices being paid for these books? I bid on a number of items, but more often than not the hammer price ended up on the moon.

In part, it made me a little sad to think that the price of entry into these quality books is now so lofty. I was hoping to get an example of a Bethlehem book for my collection, but frankly, I couldn't handle the heat in the kitchen! And it wasn't just the pedigree books either. It seemed that any and every book that was graded NM 9.2 or higher went for multiples of Guide.

On the other hand, this auction gives further evidence that the hobby is alive and well. And really I shouldn't be complaining. On a smaller scale, I contributed to this madness myself just this afternoon. I won the auction for a nice copy of CBM #2 on eBay, a steal at $37!

Todd Kvamme, California

More Yoram Forum

Just as a follow up to the whole scarcity/demand of ASM #28, a CGC graded VF/NM 9.0 copy is currently up for auction on eBay (item #329595601, in case you wanted to have a look). At this moment, the high bid is $920, with five days still to go on the auction! I'm very curious to find out what it will finally sell for! No doubt it will be yet another documented sale above $1,000.

On another topic, I couldn't help but notice that the first 20 or so issues of Cerebus decreased in value in this year's Guide. When I stopped laughing, I listed the first 20 issues of Cerebus on eBay to gauge exactly how far off the mark the Guide was. The results were interesting: #1(F- @ $381); #2 (VF @ $120); #2 (VF @ $115) #3 (VF- @ $112); #4 (NM- @ $50); #5 (VF/NM @ $70); #6 (VF/NM @$47); #7 (VF/NM @ $46); #8 (NM- @ $20); #9 (NM- @ $37); #10 (NM- @ $30); #11 (VF/NM @ $35); #12, 13, 15-20 in NM @ 2-2.5x Guide; #14 (VF/NM @ $37).

I have had the same results for issues of Richie Rich the Poor Little Rich Boy below #100, and his earlier appearances in Harvey Hits #3 and 9 (#3 in VG- went for 4.5x Guide on eBay).

Just wanted to inform you about some of the interesting sales on eBay.

By the way, I just picked up Wonder Woman #199 for the stunning Jeff Jones cover. If that's not a classic cover, then I don't know what is.

Yoram Matzkin, via E-mail

Cartoony and slapstick?

Greatly enjoyed the Atlas spotlight in CBM #77. I recall the thrill of discovering a new comics publisher on which to spend my hard-earned allowance. Atlas didn't last long enough to make good on their promise as a company, but they did publish some intriguing titles, including Targitt, which was unfairly maligned (in my opinion) in your article.

Was the comic book somewhat "neurotic," as you put it? Yep. But I assume that was just because the company panicked at the thought of a non-superhero tough-guy comic book in a superhero-driven marketplace. I could argue that they should have stayed true to the vision of the book's creators, but I can't really blame them for getting cold feet. After all, business is business, and Atlas was in business to make money.

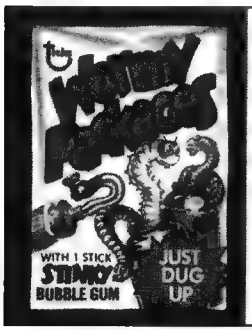
And anyway, the stories were, while perhaps a bit schizo, also intelligent and uncompromisingly tough for the time period. Actually, they were very much a precursor to Marvel's Punisher series that came a while later. And writer Gerry Conway was involved with both, making Targitt an even more interesting historical footnote.

But what really annoyed me was your writers calling the artwork "cartoony" and "slapstick." I was also surprised that they didn't recognize or credit the artist, Howard Nostrand (even though he's credited in the books, along with the writers, who were also not identified in your article). I can appreciate that Nostrand's work was perhaps out of step with the times, since he was an older artist whose best work was done in the early '50s for Harvey's sometimes brilliant horror line. But Nostrand was a great comics artist, whose work was much in the style of Will Eisner's, including an innate knowledge of how to use comics' cinematic qualities to help tell a story. Would your writers have called Eisner "cartoony" and "slapstick"?

One of Targitt's writers, Ric Meyers, recently called Nostrand "quite a character, to say the least. Big and bold, like a big, friendly bear. He was very enthusiastic and collaborative with my concepts for the boom, and I'll always also remember the pleasure of seeing his work on the issue where we changed Targitt from a Dirty Harry ripoff into a superhero—especially his "Manstalker" intro, when he shoots the paper out of a villain's hand. The three panels of the villain reading, reacting to the bullet, and then the new, improved, costumed Targitt standing there with smoking gun, remains with me all these years later."

Targitt represented Nostrand's last comics work ever; he died shortly after the line folded. He deserves much higher praise in CBM (and maybe I'll be the one to write it for you) than he received here.

Jeff Gelb, California



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Love Michelle Nolan!

Ms. Nolan's notebook is one of the reasons I keep coming back to CBM. Her insights and knowledge always teach me something new and make me rethink what I know about Golden Age comics. I hope I can pass along a bit of information to her. In her May 2000 column, she mentioned that she couldn't comment on the Bulletgirl crossover in Mary Marvel #8. It was reprinted in Shazam! From the '40s to the '70s, published by Harmony Books in 1977. The 11-page story would appear to be a precursor to the odd villains that appeared later in the series; in it, Mary and Bulletgirl face Dr. Riddle and The Weeper. Not only do the two heroines know each other's secret identities, the villains know that Bulletgirl is in reality Susan Kent (since they try both to hang her and stab her).

Patrick Dilley, via E-mail

Would like to have the reassurance

I have a wonderful and near complete NM Silver Age collection. Needing only a few Silver Age books to complete my collection I have been contemplating purchasing Golden Age. However, the key Golden Age comics in higher grade are out of my price range. Also, these same key Golden Age comic books in lower grade have fluctuated or declined so vastly in the Guide that I fear they may be a poor investment. I am not solely collecting for investment, however, I would like to have the reassurance if I ever decided to part with my collection, my years of collecting have not been futile.

My question to you is, if I am considering collecting Golden Age, should I think twice about collecting books in GD or VG condition? I know a VF/NM Batman #1 or Superman #1 is out of my price range, but is a GD copy a wise investment? I have been dwelling on this question for the past few years as the Guide seems to have stabilized or relinquished in value for books of lower grade. Therefore, I seek your expert advice on this matter and look forward to your reply.

Stuart Friedlander, via E-mail

I feel I can best answer your question by sharing how I handle my Golden Age purchases. First, I never even think about resale value with 99% of all the books I buy. I just want them for my collection and/or research, and don't expect to resell them at a profit or break even in the future.

Marvel-ous

Really enjoyed CBM #77! The cover gallery was excellent of the Atlas titles! Some of these books are really Marvelous! For anyone wanting a further look into the Atlas titles, pick up an Amazing Heroes #81 (if you can find one) for an article by Ken Jones! It is an excellent look into the Atlas title so often overlooked by collectors! Try finding some of these comics in high grade!

How about doing an article on Marvel/Atlas westerns?

Dan Simon, Kentucky

You're in luck! Check out the upcoming CBM #82 for an extensive look at Marvel Westerns.

Before they're no longer available

You did it again! Another excellent issue of CBM! I wanted to know more about the Silver Age Wonder Woman and CBM delivered! The cover to CBM #78 is similar in concept to the title page of Wonder Woman #214. Did that page inspire this issue's cover?

I was slightly disappointed with the feature on Ross Andru and Mike Esposito mostly because I was hoping for a full, never before published interview but Will Murray did an excellent job with the information he had. Ross Andru is one of those many contributors to comics whose work is grossly underrated.

Pat S. Calhoun's article on The Suicide Squad along with the featured Wonder Woman article by Myls Putman reminded me how much I enjoyed Mr. Andru's work as a child and how in awe of his work I am now as an adult.

In the "Travails of Mortals: Wonder Woman's Transformation in the late '60s" article by Gerard J. Waggett, Mr. Waggett leaves an impression that Dennis O'Neil wrote and edited most of the new Wonder Woman stories. According to the publisher notes at the bottom of the first pages of the comics, Jack Miller was the initial editor of Wonder Woman during that period from issues #178 to 181. Artist Mike Sekowsky was made editor of the title with #182 and removed O'Neil from the writing of the book. Sekowsky wrote the stories himself until he left the title and O'Neil was hired as editor/writer with issue #199 and continued until issue #203. Almost all those issues do not have creator credits with the exception of three.

Although I enjoyed Mr. Waggett's article this omission of Sekowsky seems to me odd being that Mr. Sekowsky was a major contributor during that period of the title. Dick Giordano was the inker on most of those issues and later when O'Neil became editor, Giordano did the entire art for the books. There is one issue with uncredited inks by Wally Wood, and Jeff Jones was responsible for those two lovely covers for issue #199 and 200.

Not having any oral history by either Mike Sekowsky and Ross Andru is pretty sad and I'm glad the comics community is now trying harder to record as much information and interview as many personalities as possible before the sources are no longer available.

I could go on and on about CBM #78, but I could also do the same about any given issue so I'll just say keep on doing what you're doing and I'll keep on reading.

Thelmon Baggett, California

Bravo Pat

Enjoy Pat Calhoun's wonderful column each month. Although Pat doesn't know it, he's the reason I've added dozens of new items, previously unknown to me, to my want list. Bravo!

Evan Miller, New York

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world... and I hope you enjoyed this special 96-page EC tribute issue. Don't forget, your opinion counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content.

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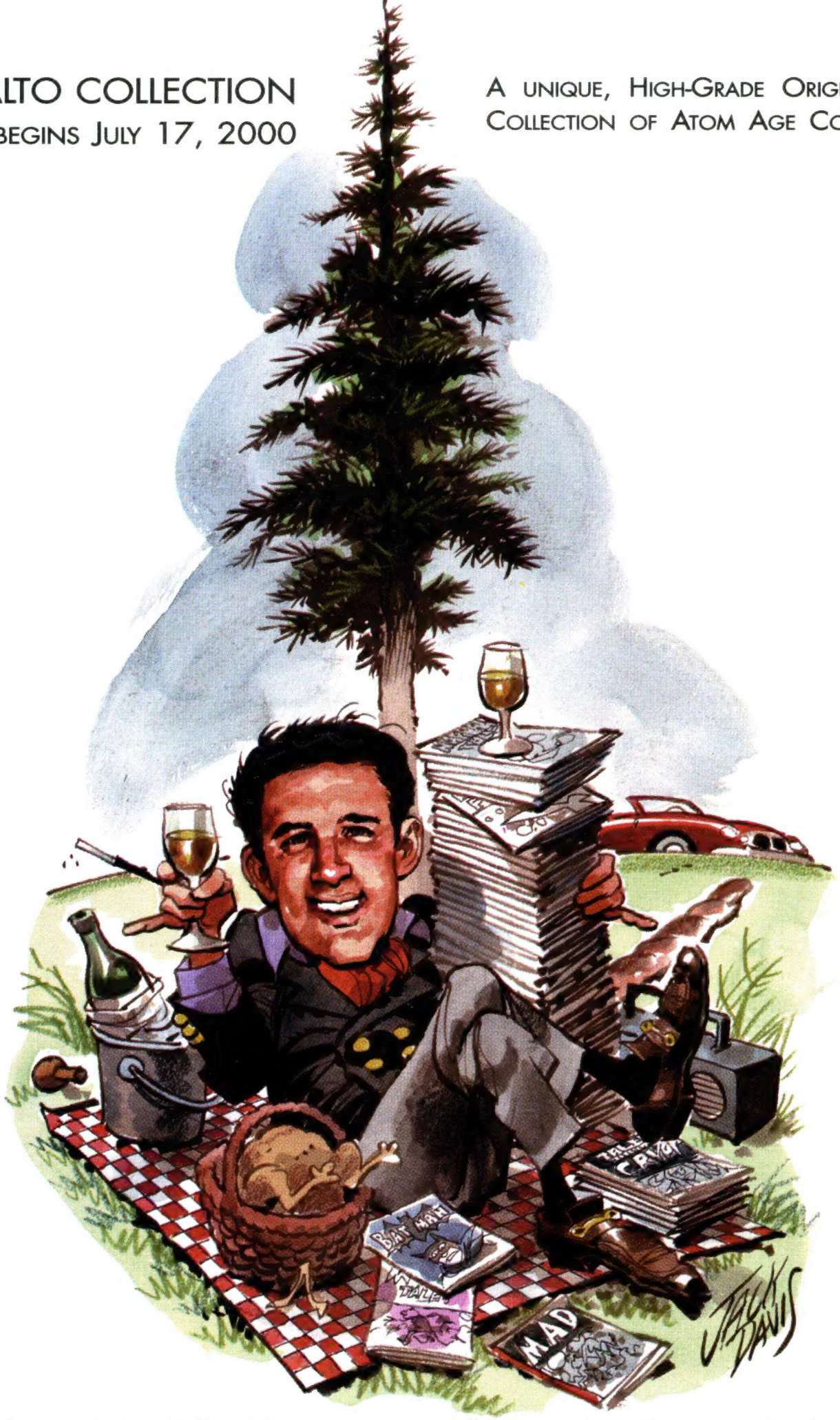

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